BUE BOOK

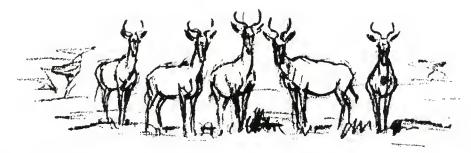
Magazine

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The TROUBLE with my DOUBLE

A joyous novel by Horatio Winslow · Conrad Richter Guy Endore · Samuel Andrew Wood · Leland Jamieson

Prize Stories of Real Experience



A Naturalist's Sketchbook

II-Kongoni and Lions

By WALTER J. WILWERDING

HE natives of East Africa call him kongoni; but to the naturalist he is Coke's Hartebeest. Early Dutch settlers noted that the kongoni was about the size and color of their red deer, or hart, and at once called it Hartebeest.

It is an animal of the open veldt, living in herds of considerable size. Usually a wary female stands guard while the rest graze; because of this habit they are difficult to approach. At first alarm they run, then stop and stare from a distance. They look grotesque with their long faces, and horns a bit too high for beauty.

Though they are harmless creatures, I had a very close call on their account. Several times I had come upon the remains of young ones and found the mothers roaming about alone, looking for their offspring. The lions near my camp at Lalgarjin, near Kilimanjaro, had found the young kongoni easy prey.

It may seem like a paradox, but in order to help the kongoni I shot one of them to leave as a bait for lions—a small sacrifice, in view of the hundreds that a single lion will kill.

I had to follow the kongoni a long way before I got one, and it had to be dragged another long distance to where there were some trees, so we could build a "machan" in which to wait for lions.

It was sunset when the *machan* was ready, and I returned to camp for my dinner. I was sure that I had plenty of time, for the lions never started stirring about until around eight in the evening.

When I had finished my dinner, it was quite dark; so, taking my flash-light and rifle, I started away to spend the night in the *machan*. I was walking along talking to my gun-bearer; we had about reached the spot where the kongoni was securely tied to a tree-stump, when I flashed the light in that direction to see if everything was all right. But to my amazement, two lights flashed back at me, and an ominous growl said plainly: "Keep of!"

My gun-bearer whispered "Simba!"—but I needed no one to tell me the identity of our visitor. The lion had beat us to the kongoni! With that beast just a few yards away, and only the lights of its eyes for a target, it would have been folly to shoot; so we shouted at the top of our lung capacity. That unusual chorus was a bit too much for the lion, and we heard him rush away into the bushes; but he had torn a hind-leg off the kongoni and taken it along. As he had taken his meal with him, and our shouting had no doubt disturbed others, we thought it useless to stay in the machan that night.







so we covered the kongoni remains with oranches and returned to camp.

The next night I returned, this time eary enough to be there first; and I reduced the lion menace for the kongoni. Yet whenever I look at my kongoni sketches, I think of those hair-raising moments when I walked up to a lion in the dark and disturbed him at his supper.



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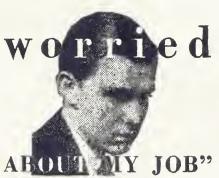
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a time. This had heen going on several days when my turn came.

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BLUE BOOK



JUNE, 1934

MAGAZINE

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A Naturalist's Sketchbook Cover Design

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Except for stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events.

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In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is harred. Manuscripts sbould be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably hut not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable.

A pen name may be used if desired, hut in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original, for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return. As this is a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.

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very, "I am a writer"?

If the latter course is the one of our choosing, you probably never ill write. Lawyers must be law erks. Engineers must be draftsmen. e all know that, in our times, the g does come before the chicken.

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The (Irouble with

The blithe biography of an upright young man whose suppressed wicked impulses amazingly appear personified to confront him.

By HORATIO WINSLOW

THEN, on my Aunt Paula's return from abroad, I related to her the full account of everything which had taken place, she began by looking grave; then she started to laugh; and by the time I finished, I was afraid she had gone into hysterics.

"So that's your alibi!" she said, getting off the davenport and holding onto the mantel with one hand while wiping her eyes with the other. "Oh, Elroy

Simmons!"

"That is my complete true confession story," I replied; "and I fail to see any-

thing funny about same."

"In your position, Elroy, quite natural. No perspective-no laugh: it's one of the seven rules of art.' But are you sure all you've told me was no more than a series of bad dreams with a little embroidery around the edges? A back-fire from one of your correspondence-courses on Cosmic Breath-control?"

"Do you mean to say you don't believe what I'm telling you about Suppy?" I demanded, getting up so suddenly that the springs in the chair squeaked twice.

"Frankly, Elroy, I'm afraid nobody could swallow Suppy except a Baron Munchausen fan, and he'd have to get up before breakfast and mix it with a lot of orange-juice. But if it will make you feel any better, I believe that you believe

"Aunt Paula," I stated, stopping before the davenport, "all you have said simply worries me more and more. I do not doubt now, and I have never doubted, that Professor Upomenos was responsible for the whole business. I consider it my duty to get out a pamphlet showing him up as a menace to the common

"Oh, indeed, Elroy! So your real reason for coming is to ask whether in my opinion you should write and publish

this pamphlet."

"Yes, Aunt Paula."

"Tell me one thing first: Considering the outcome of your remarkable adventures, exactly what is wrong, anyhow? Where is your big kick?"

"Aunt Paula, it I reflected a little.

was a terrible experience."

"So is an operation; but I notice that as soon as the patient leaves the hospital,

he begins broadcasting."

"That's just the trouble, Aunt Paula. I can't give the full details to anyone. I just keep thinking about them. Sometimes I'm afraid they'll drive me crazy."

"All right, print them. But what's your reason for a pamphlet against Pro-fessor Upomenos? Tell the complete story to John J. Public. Why not? Even if he believes it's nothing but a dream or a lie, it would do a great deal of good."

"Just who would it do good to?"
"Principally to yourself, Elroy. Set your adventures on paper and stop brooding over them. Forget your worry and

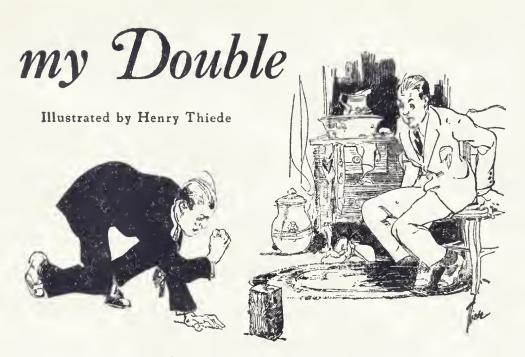
indignation by telling all."

Here, therefore, I tell the whole amazing story:

THERE was a punch, as you might say, just in looking at Professor Upomenos. That evening I had gone to the lecture because I was in a desperate situation. But no sooner had I caught sight of the Professor than a thrill ran along my spine. It was just as though some one had whispered: "Here is the master of nature's secrets, who can and will help you; here is the party who can save you even though all seems lost."

Professor Upomenos was not only a big man, but the bushy black beard that flowed over his barrel chest bulged him out till he seemed to fill the entire plat-form at Odd Fellows' Hall. Above those whiskers his nose sprang out as if it were going to hit you; his eyes glinted and sparkled under eyebrows like birds'

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He shook his fist at the brick he had stubbed his toe upon, while his voice rose to a shriek: "Omit that omit brick! Omit the man who made that omit brick!"

nests. Two different ladies sitting near me whispered: "What a man!" And

they were certainly right.

After Professor Upomenos had preliminaried his lecture by a careful study first of the ceiling and then of the walls, he wound up by concentrating his gaze on the large and intelligent audience present. As he switched to this last target, everything quieted down so you could hear necks rasping against collars. The silence had become almost unbearable when, stepping forward and pointing his finger in the general direction of Row 10, where I was sitting, Professor Upomenos shouted:

"Who was responsible for the success

of George Washington?"

Nobody answered. In any event it would have been useless to try to cut in, because without hesitating the Professor went on the same as a teacher conduct-

ing an oral examination.

"How did Abraham Lincoln, a poor unknown boy, become the greatest figure of all history? What was the suppressed secret of the triumphs of Theodore Roosevelt? Napoleon Bonaparte? Julius Cæsar? Gladstone? Bismarck? Robert Fulton? Jay Gould? James J. Hill? Beethoven? King Solomon? Alexander the Great?

"What is this jealously guarded and suppressed secret, known to all great men past and present, which has been, which still is, which always will be, responsible for each and every monumental success achieved by the individual?"

As the Professor lowered his voice and continued, everybody in the hall leaned forward so as not to miss a single word.

"My friends, I am here tonight in your beautiful little city to tear away the veil, to reveal the mystery back of the success of the so-called great and famous. Let us reason together. Do you picture these men climbing to the pinnacles of success alone and unaided? No! Ten thousand times no! They gained the heights thanks to the Infallible Counselor—that hidden helper, that secret partner, that mysterious fellow-worker, as to whose identity histories, biographies and learned works dealing with personality, magnetism and efficiency remain mendaciously silent."

EVERYONE had become so still that I could hear my watch tick.

"My friends, success in this world was, is, always will be, the natural result of secret aid given to the fortunate individual by the Infallible Counselor. I repeat, by the Infallible Counselor!"

With his whiskers bristling like quills and his eyes showing considerable white, the Professor now slammed his fist on the table and then, waving his right fore-



finger in a circle till it pointed directly at me, shouted: "And you, young man, you know that in your chosen field you are not attaining that full success warranted by your talents. Every time you open your billfold, you say to yourself: 'Where are those extra dollars which would have been mine if only somebody had told me when to speak up and when to remain silent?' Young man, one heart-to-heart talk with the Infallible Counselor would have meant not only those extra dollars but the fruition of your most extravagant dreams. Prosperity! Happiness! Success!"

I sat there practically unable to close my mouth. It was as though he knew all about my critical situation as costs-clerk at the Van Hulsteyn Battery Works.

Once more Professor Upomenos resumed in his ordinary tone of voice:

"More clearly than any words, your eager faces reveal the question nearest your hearts. 'Is there,' you ask, 'a ray of sunshine in this somber and darkened sky? Is there hope?' Yes, my friends, yes!" He raised his right arm into the air, pointing at the ceiling with the extended forefinger. "Yes, there is hope: the Infallible Counselor still lives."

Along about ten o'clock Professor Upomenos suddenly produced a square packet tied in red tape and closed with

a large green seal.

"My friends," the Professor's voice boomed out like the deep tones of the organ at the First Consolidated Church, "the secret enabling you to put yourself in touch with the Infallible Counselor is here in my hand. Within this sealed package is a volume which, in plain, unmistakable language, tells you how to consult the Infallible Counselor and thereby climb from the depths of obscurity and distress to the sunlit heights of fame and fortune. And this epoch-making revelation is yours, my friends, for little more than the mere price of printing and binding. Who will be the first intelligent, ambitious, farseeing man or woman to come upon the platform and receive the age-old and complete secret of the Infallible Counselor for a mere pittance?"

If I beat the others to it, the reason

was because I used my elbows.

"Here is a young man who is going to amount to something," shouted Professor Upomenos, bringing his hand down on my shoulder. "He knows what he wants, and is willing to pay the trifling sum asked for it. Before another year rolls around, this ambitious young man will write me and say it's the biggest and best ten-dollar investment he ever made in all his life."

With these words Professor Upomenos helped me select the proper amount from my billfold, passed me the greensealed packet, and with a long, piercing look into my eyes, gently shoved me to the left and out of the way of the other

customers.

CHAPTER II

I RAN practically all the way home. Instead of stopping as usual outside the show-window of Nate Cullen's Auto Agency and criticizing the flash appearance of the red sports roadster with yellow wheels, I hardly gave it a glance.

Once in my rented room at Mrs. Lammick's, I locked the door and pulled down the shade. My hands trembled as I cut the tapes, broke the seal and tore

off the paper wrapper....

I can only say that an examination of the book proved one of the greatest and most crushing disappointments ever experienced in my entire life. What with the large type and wide margins and thick paper, there was not room in the volume for much more besides the lecture I had just heard. The only new matter began on Page 125 and finished in the middle of Page 129, which was the end of the book.

Everything I had imagined about the Infallible Counselor turned out to be completely wrong. He was not an individual; he was not even a secret society; he was merely a sort of secondary per-

sonality in each human being, and from Page 125 on, he was termed "Your Sup-

pressed Comrade."

Every day, according to the book, instead of following various worthy and useful success-impulses that came into your head, you ruthlessly suppressed them. As a result of not being acted upon, these success-impulses remained in the interior of your mind, where they not only perfected themselves but joined up and became a unit. This unit, the Suppressed Comrade, composed entirely of helpful, enterprising and ambitious ideas and ideals, was naturally and in every way a superior intelligence. Hence when you wanted to know what to do or how to do it, you had only to put the question in the right way to your Suppressed Comrade, and immediately a quick solution would pop into your mind.

As I finished this statement at the top of Page 128, I felt so grossly swindled that I rose with every intention of throwing the book across the room. It was only with difficulty that I managed to keep myself from this ridiculous action.

By a strong effort of self-control I finished the remaining page and a half. Seven exercises were described, their object being to put you in touch with your

Suppressed Comrade.

In Exercise One, you placed yourself flat on your back, arms at sides, right leg over left to prevent the cosmic current from escaping, at the same time breathing so as to bear down on the diaphragm. After seven extremely rapid breaths, followed by seven slow and profound respirations, you repeated: "I want to get in touch with my Suppressed Comrade. I want to enjoy the guidance furnished by his superior wisdom. I want to attain success through the aid of his friendly understanding. I want to meet my Suppressed Comrade face to face."

The remaining six exercises were considerably like Number One, except that the breathing was varied. Each was to

be done twenty-one times.

Before I had finished Page 129, I was so irritated that I got up and stamped across the room. In doing this I stubbed my toe against the red plush-covered brick used as a door-stop, and with difficulty refrained from pitching the same through the closed window. I mention this incident to give an idea of my exasperated state.



Decorations by Margery Stocking

This state, I may say, was not alone the result of having been swindled by Professor Upomenos. There were other reasons.

At the Van Hulsteyn Battery Works my job was in danger. On Thursday, Mr. Van Hulsteyn had discharged the entire laboratory staff, and it was probable I would come next. But even if I stayed on, there was trouble ahead. Mr. Van Hulsteyn was fooling himself in thinking he had a rechargeable dry-battery ready for the market. Unless Mr. Davenanter or some other capitalist took an intelligent, personal and financial interest in the firm, Mr. Van Hulsteyn was headed for bankruptcy. As costs-clerk I knew this better than anyone else. And when my job at Van Hulsteyn's collapsed, there was nothing open for me in the town of Quantus, and unless times changed, probably nothing elsewhere.

If ever a human being needed competent advice it was myself. After mature reflection I decided that even if there was only one chance in a hundred of consulting my Suppressed Comrade, I owed it to myself to make the effort. Opening the book again to the first exercise, I placed myself in the proper position and went through with it twenty-one times, a proceeding I followed with each of the remaining six.

EXACTLY one hour and four minutes later I finished the series.

So far as I could notice, no change of any sort had occurred; I was no more in touch with a Suppressed Comrade than I had been sixty-five minutes earlier.

"Well," I said to myself, "I had better

write off that ten dollars to profit and loss. Tomorrow is Saturday and—"

I stopped to examine a four-line note at the bottom of Page 126. Somehow I had skipped this while concentrating on the exercises. It read:

"Danger! Students of this book are solennly warned to perform each exercise seven times a night and no oftener for three successive nights. In case any exercise is performed more than seven times in twenty-four hours, we decline all responsibility for what may happen."

I had hardly finished re-reading this when my temples began pounding and my ears buzzing. It was like the onset of a severe fever. Less than a minute later I had dropped on the bed with a headache which jarred me to my very heels.

From the foot of the stairs, her voice sounding a mile away, Mrs. Lammick called to say that the keys were under the clock, and that she was leaving to catch the midnight train, not to return till Old Home Week was over. I felt unable to answer, and when the front door closed, I only wished that I had asked her to telephone from the station for Dr. Spalsbury.

IT was the longest night of my entire life. In addition to the headache, I suffered from a kind of delirium. Trying to master my nerves by repeating an electrical formula, I found myself saying; "In order to recharge a dry-battery brush off the manganese and open the depolarizer with a corkscrew. Add a little lemon peel and serve in tall glasses."

Even the address of welcome, which as president of the Young People's Advancement Society I was to deliver on Wednesday noon, became a jumble of words and phrases. My carefully prepared tribute to Mr. Spinford, once a Quantus boy and now the Bermuda Onion King, and to Mr. Davenanter, the Master Mind of Wall Street, became a sing-song chant:

"Mr. Spinny-Spinny-Spinford, you are old; Mr. Davenavenpanter, you are gray. You can neither laugh nor smile—you can only cramp our style; go away, old Spinformanter, an arma,"

Spinfornanter, go away."

After four hours of this sort of thing, with my head splitting down the middle, I jumped out of bed, and snatching up the Suppressed Success Secret of Professor Upomenos, carried it downstairs and dropped it into the garbage pail.

This drastic action seemed to have a certain effect. Coming back to my room,

I fell into an uneasy sleep which lasted until the alarm clock went off at seven.

CHAPTER III

WHEN you are coming down with a serious illness, there are usually plenty of twinges and pains to tell what is just around the corner. But nobody pays any attention to them. In my own case, besides a continuous headache, there were various warning symptoms on Saturday which should have put me on my guard. I merely attributed them to eye-strain or excitement over Old Home Week, and refused to admit that they were in any way connected with efforts to get in touch with my Suppressed Comrade.

Sunday morning when I reached the shop for overtime, I was much surprised to find Mr. Van Hulsteyn pacing up and down the office ordinarily occupied by Ray Buckbee and myself. Ray was at his desk, and as I entered, he winked at me in an almost unnoticeable manner.

"Well, well, Simmons," snapped Mr. Van Hulsteyn, shaking his bald head and puffing slightly. "Well, well, sir, where are the completed figures on the cost of recharging our Number Three dry-battery?"

I was obliged to tell him, what he knew already, that these figures could not possibly be in final shape before Monday noon. As I finished speaking, his bald head got pinker and his ears and wattles redder, while his waist and neck seemed to swell out.

"Well, well, Simmons," he growled, "there seems to be a lack of pep and energy in this department, and I demand to know why. Bear in mind I must have the verified estimates for the whole series by Wednesday noon, to place before Davenanter. If you can't get them out on time, sir, I'll find somebody who can and will."

He suddenly began sniffing and crinkling his big nose. "One more thing! For several days, Simmons, there's been a smell of cigarette smoke in this office. I won't have it, sir. Simmons, you know our rules."

"Yes sir," was my reply, given in a respectful tone of voice, though had it not been for Ray, I would have enjoyed stating at length that I had never used tobacco in any form.

With a final glare Mr. Van Hulsteyn slammed the door behind him. Ray stood



up, and listened while Mr. Van Hulsteyn's footfalls could be heard dying away down the hall. When the door below closed, Ray dropped back in his chair, and placing his feet on the desk,

lit a cigarette.

"Dear Mr. Van Hulsteyn," he said between puffs, "yours received and contents noted. Please oblige undersigned by taking a jump into Wolf River. Cordially yours, Ray Buckbee. Say, Elroy, doesn't Old Shortsighted give you a pain! Some morning when he snoops in and bends over to pick something from the floor and begins well-welling, Well, well, is this the way you waste erasers!' wouldn't you like to slip him a good swift kick?"

"No, Ray," I said indignantly, "no, I am glad to say I have never entertained such feelings toward any employer. Moreover I believe in poise, self-control and respect for others, both as to person

and property."

I had hardly finished speaking when I picked up the waste-basket, balanced it between my two hands, and then dropkicked it through the open window, at the same time crying in a voice I could hardly recognize as my own: "Field goal by Simmons: Wisconsin wins!"

I had barely finished this remarkable exhibition when shame at the occurrence overcame me. I could feel my cheeks redden as, with legs trembling, I

dropped back into my chair.

Ray clapped his hands together the

same as if applauding.

"Dear Mr. Simmons," he said. "Congratulations. You are becoming human. The quick brown fox sure jumped over the lazy bear that time. You must be full of rabbit's milk. Enthusiastically yours, Ray Buckbee."

I was too ashamed and confused to

make any answer whatever.

With an effort I centered my attention on the figures before me. Ordinarily this job would have been simple enough, but now it was the hardest kind of work. In addition to the headache, I was bothered by the same sort of feeling that hits you when you wake up in the morning with the recollection that at fourthirty P. M. you have a date with the dentist.

I do not know how I managed to get through the morning's stint. But by the time eleven-fifty came I had, in spite of all handicaps, pretty well finished the work I had laid out for myself.

As I replaced the figured sheets in the desk-drawer, Ray lit another cigarette and said: "Elroy, ever realize you're missing a lot of fun in life, especially with girls? I don't know why, but girls like you. I've heard my sister say so."

"Ray," I stated firmly, "I am not interested in any girl whatever except my fiancée, Miss Mullet, who lives with her

marin et , un

mother at Elm Center."



"Be your age, Elroy; I'm not going to tell anybody. . . . Not even Julie Van Hulsteyn?"

"Why should I be interested in Miss

Van Hulsteyn?"

"Because you can't help yourself, Elroy. Wait and see. Maybe she'll make a personal appearance here this noon. I heard the old man telephoning, and it sounded that way."

"Well?"

"Elroy, stop, look and listen. Julie's come back from school a knockout. And when you lamp Julie Peaches Van Hulsteyn, with her blue eyes double-o-ing into yours, and her mouth all puckered up, you'll want to throw your arms around her and hold her tight and say: 'Now, baby, close your eyes, pucker up your lips, and let papa slip you a big extra-special super-kiss.'"

"Ray," I said indignantly, "under no circumstances have I ever insulted or will I ever insult any woman whatever. That has been my motto throughout life, and

I will never swerve from it."

I had hardly finished this remark, which expressed my deepest sentiments, when, walking to the window through which I had dropkicked the waste-basket, and conscious of what I was about to do though without being able to stop same, I placed four fingers in my mouth and let out a long, piercing whistle. Two girls on the street below halted and looked up. "Hello, red-hot mammas!" I yelled. I might have been a talkingmachine, as far as I could control my goings-on. "Hello, red-hot mammas! See you next Thanksgiving—turkey and whoopee!"

As I finished this remarkable announcement, I seemed to regain control. With a quick move I closed the window and

tottered back to my desk.

"Dear Mr. Simmons," Ray said. "As a Jekyll-and-Mr.-Hyde, you're certainly good. I retract all former statements.

When you write your love-confessions kindly put down our Mr. Buckbee for an autographed copy. Faithfully yours, Ray Buckbee."

Just then the office door opened, and there stood Mr. Van Hulsteyn's daughter.

For a moment I felt like rubbing my eyes to make sure they were not tricking me, and that it was really Miss Van Hulsteyn. Previously I had seen her on more than one occasion without being particularly attracted. As a little girl, for such I had always considered her, she had been given to tennis costumes and the like. Now she was so dressed that she seemed grown up, and yet for some reason looked younger than ever. Her brown hair curled naturally, and ringlets of it could be seen about her ears and on her forehead. Her eyes were blue and wide open. And her lips, just as Ray said, puckered. She was indeed, as he put it, a knockout.

Strangest of all was the fact that, though on previous meetings she had never given me a second look, she now remained perfectly motionless, smiling

directly at me.

DO not know how long we stood there staring into each other's eyes before she shivered suddenly and straightened, the same as subjects on the stage when the hypnotist snaps his fingers.

"What was I saying? Oh, yes, I hadn't said anything at all. It's so good to see you again, Mr. Simmons; and of course, you too, Mr. Buckbee. I wanted to ask you, Mr. Simmons, if you could tell me where to find Dad. I've been looking—why, Mr. Simmons, what is it?"

A miracle saved me. Without being aware of my actions, I had walked three steps forward, at the same moment reaching out my right arm till it was on a level with Julie's left shoulder. Just in time I managed to choke back what I was about to say: "Now, baby, close your

eyes, pucker up your lips, and let papa slip you a big extra-special super-kiss."

"Cobweb on your collar," I explained jerkily after swallowing twice.

web. Brush it off."

"Please do, Mr. Simmons," she said, as an extra dash of red spotted her cheeks. And she left the office almost on

CHAPTER IV

WITHOUT another word to Ray, who sat with a cynical leer on his face, I snatched my hat and hurried out of the building. By a sort of inspiration I remembered that on Sundays Dr. Spalsbury had a consultation-hour from twelve to one, and with sudden hope I hurried over to Main Street and up to the fifth floor of the old First National Bank Building. Fortunately there were no other patients. I had hardly come into the waiting-room when the private door opened, and Dr. Spalsbury said: "Well, Elroy?"

Having once been successfully cured by Dr. Spalsbury of an attack of measles, I placed great confidence in him. This confidence was increased by the fact that he wore long white whiskers. Walking into his private office, I sat down in the

chair beside the operating-table.

"What seems to be the trouble, Elroy?" Dr. Spalsbury asked.

"Dr. Spalsbury," I said, "I would like to see you alone."

He gave me a queer look and emitted a sound which made you think of bees in the distance—"M-m-m." At the same time he stroked his long white whiskers. "Unless somebody's hiding in the inkwell, Elroy, there are only the two of us."

This response left me considerably confused. I had not intended making my last observation, which had popped out as the consequence of an illusion-feeling that somebody from the waiting-room had followed me into the inner office.

"I just said that for fun," I replied. "You see, Doctor, my trouble is strictly

confidential."

Dr. Spalsbury said "M-m-m-m" again and stroked his whiskers as before.

I now cleared my throat with the intention of stating why I feared I was going crazy, and then confessing everything that had happened. Before I could get started, however, Dr. Spalsbury had begun jabbing at various parts of my anatomy and asking questions about my daily habits, such as if I smoked cigarettes, if I took regular daily walks, and if I chewed every mouthful of food or washed it down with drinking fluids.

After finishing his examination he jotted down a few lines on a prescriptionpad, and then, standing up, tapped me on the head with the words: "It will come out all right."

"What-my hair?" I asked, such be-

ing my state of mind.

"No, no, Elroy, not your hair, but your nervous digestive difficulty. Have this soothing mixture filled at Schimmelpfennig's drug-store, and begin taking it at once. Stop worrying about your bad health. Laugh it off. That's the way. Do it again. Take along this little book of drummers' yarns. Go home and read it and laugh. Two dollars, Elroy."

I first felt in the pockets of my vest, because I was always wanting to tuck away a couple of bills in one of these hiding-places and then forget they were there. As usual, owing to my small salary, I had neglected to prepare myself this happy surprise, and was consequently forced to take the money from my

billfold.

Going down the stairway, I could not get rid of the idea that Dr. Spalsbury or somebody else was following from be-Two or three times I stopped, fully expecting to see those white whiskers turning a corner of the wall. But nothing like that happened, and as often as I stopped to listen, my ears caught only absolute and utter silence. I had just reached the street when my eyes closed of their own accord.

THE next thing I remember is standing I on the sidewalk fifty yards down the street in the direction of Schimmelpfennig's. Near the bubbler drinking-fountain on the corner was a girl with a face as red as a strawberry. Directly in front of me balanced a young man with doubled fists, whose face was even redder. He was talking to me, and somehow I knew he had been going on that way for some time.

"One more snort out of you, gigolo, and you'll spend the rest of your life paying dentist's bills. What did you do? You come up to her, and you says: 'Brush the cobwebs off, baby? Yo-lee-

a**h-**lee-hoo.' "

"That is simply ridiculous," I said, pulling myself together and trying to understand the situation. "Why would I come up to a lady I never met, and say; 'Brush the cobwebs off, baby'?"

This natural query seemed to make

him even wilder.

"Why? Because you didn't know she was my girl friend, and that I was on the job. Anyhow you didn't say it; you done it in a yodel. Yo-lee-ah-lee-hoo! Like that."

"There must be some mistake--"

He did not let me finish. "Make that mistake once more, buddy, but yodel to your favorite undertaker first and tell him where to pick you up. I'm telling you, and I'm telling you out loud."

The rest of the way home,—for I did not attempt to stop in at Schimmelpfennig's,—was just one long effort. Each time I lifted a foot, it was as though I were pulling it out of soft asphalt. But even more painful than my drowsy sensation was the feeling that no matter what had already happened, worse was to come. Time and again I looked back with the conviction that the angry young man or a police officer or somebody else was following me. But no matter how quickly I jerked around, nothing was to be seen but the deserted Sunday street.

ONCE at Mrs. Lammick's, I locked and bolted the front door. Then, having made sure there was no one else on the premises, I ran up to my room and

turned the key behind me.

Previously I had wanted nothing so much as the privilege of dropping off to sleep. Now the mere idea filled me with a growing terror. Having wet my forehead with cold water, I decided to try to forget my troubles and remain wide awake by reading a few comical pieces from the Drummer's Fun Budget, Number Three. It was then I discovered that by accident I had left this gift volume in Dr. Spalsbury's office, and in its place had carried away a copy of a magazine entitled, "General Practitioners' Medical Digest."

In a final effort to put myself at ease, I broke into a ringing laugh at my mis-

take and opened to Page 37.

It was the last time I laughed that

Sunday. . .

"Mr. X: An Interesting Case of Neurasthenia," was the title of the article beginning at the top of the fourth page. X was an employee of M, living in the city of A. He expected to marry Miss Y, who lived in a neighboring town of B. After a series of misunderstandings with Miss Y, and also with a Mrs. Z, X began

to have the idea that he was being followed by an invisible duplicate of himself—X2. Little by little this X2 grew apparent to the eye of X, and instead of following X, began walking along by his side. Shortly afterwards X2 started passing remarks, and X answered them back."

At this moment the gooseflesh began to form between my shoulders. It felt as though some one standing behind my chair had just blown a cold breath down my back. I whirled around, only to find the door still shut and the room empty.

In spite of an overpowering desire to scream, I managed to open the magazine again. But there was not much more to the article. X was taken to a sanitarium, and the doctor in charge thought he might eventually have cured him, if at the end of the first week, after a long conversation with the imaginary X2, X had not jumped out of a fourth-story window with fatal results.

That is the last clear-cut recollection I have of Sunday, though vaguely I remember undressing and going to bed. My next confused memory is a nightmare, with Professor Upomenos catching me by one arm and one leg and trying to tear me into two separate pieces.

It was not pain I felt: it was agony. "Good-by, Miss Mullet," I remember saying. "Good-by, Mrs. Mullet." And at that instant I woke up inexpressibly tired, but strange to say, filled with a sense of peace and calm. The alarm-clock showed 3:37. I knew something remarkable had happened, but as my eyes dropped shut of their own accord, I also knew I was too tired to care what.

Probably it was the sun shining through the open window that woke me for the second time. As it lit the tracings of old rain-marks on the ceiling, I yawned, stretched, and slowly rose to a sitting position. I was about to settle back again for a final forty winks, when came the ghastly revelation:

I was not alone. There was another

party in bed with me.

CHAPTER V

THE party was completely covered by the bed-clothes, and except for his breathing, which sounded like a boy drawing water from a leaky pump, anybody would have supposed he was dead.

Such was my aghast state, that when I fell back onto the floor, I did not even



feel the shock. And I think my mouth must have continued open as I scrambled to my feet, and still staring at the shrouded form, backed into the washstand.

With the crash of the pitcher against the slop-jar, a strangled snore came from beneath the covers, followed by the words, "Whassat? Whassidea? Quiet! Quiet!"

For the first time I found myself able to speak. "Quiet, quiet, yourself!" I retorted in a voice as steady as I could make it. "Who do you think you are talking to, saying 'Quiet! Quiet!' that way?"

Two arms shot out from beneath the comforter, and I could hear the joints snap as the party stretched to full length. "I'm talking to you, Old Pandemonium. Believe it or not, this is a bedroom. The Associated Order of Baggage Smashers meets across the hall. Close the door gently from the outside." Covering his head with the sheet, he began to snore again.

It was too late now to ask how the intruder had worked his way into my room. There was just one thing to do: dress with quiet, unhurried self-control, and then leave the house and telephone for the police. Having breathed abdominally three times in a concentrative manner, I turned my back to the bed, and then, while I whistled my favorite Y.P. A. S. chorus, "Let a Little Sunshine in," I walked to the closet and took off my night-shirt. Finally, my back still to the

bed, I brushed my gray suit and dressed, at the same time repeating in a low voice selected stanzas from Longfellow's "Psalm of Life."

IT was while trying to slip my left-hand shoe on the reverse foot that I accidentally dropped same. I had just stooped to pick it up when a pillow, thrown with considerable force, caught me right below the middle of the back. At the same time the voice from the bed remarked: "True to form. Always true to form! You can't even dress yourself without making a noise like a ton of billilliard-balls crashing down a coal-chute."

Picking up the shoe and still standing on one foot, I faced about, and for the first time, had a good look at the individual who was now sitting upright, his face distorted by a frowning squint. There was something familiar about the features. "I demand to know who you are," I said sternly.

Stretching his arms and yawning, the party replied, "I'm Young Excelsior's Double, or the Mystery Man of the Second Floor Back."

"That is no answer," I said coldly, picking up the other shoe.

"Then write and ask your Congress-

man, Elroy."

I gasped, at the same time dropping the right shoe and sitting down violently. "How do you know my name?" I demanded in a voice somewhat shaken.



"It's a trade-secret," he said, yawning again. "By the way, Elroy, the next time you tumble, would you just as soon fall away from the closet? I want to look over our clothes and see what I'm going to wear."

"My friend," I said in a decisive voice, "I can state beyond the peradventure of a doubt that you have no clothes whatever in my closet. In any case I advise you to find your own personal clothes, if any, and leave this room before I call the police."

He kicked back the covers, thus revealing the fact that he was wearing one of my night-shirts. "Elroy," he said, "why not buy us pajajamas instead of flour-sacks?"

In spite of the fact that my hands were trembling, I bent and laced my shoe.

"This has gone far enough," I remarked finally, straightening up. "You have broken into a private bedroom without permission, and according to the law you are liable to a long term in State's prison. If you do not care to explain this outrage in a court of justice, kindly leave the premises at once."

Instead of paying the slightest attention, the party stretched a last time and then, whistling the "Pool-hall Blues," hopped out of bed. Calmly as though he were in his own room, he selected from the bureau my choicest suit of underclothes, socks, and a shirt. Then he walked to the closet, took down my Sunday blue serge, hefted my new tan shoes, and fingered one of the neckties.

"This isn't as bad as some of the others, Elroy, even if it does look like a trunk-strap. Stick with me, and you'll

be wearing cravats."

Unable to speak, I dropped into the nearest chair, and wiping the perspiration from my forehead, watched the intruder deliberately dress himself.

"How do you like the effect, Elroy?" he said when he had finished. "And see what I did to that so-called necktie." Assuming the position of a clothes-dummy in a show window, he turned slowly around as though mounted on a revolving disk.

I had worn the blue serge on Sundays and various evening occasions, and it had always presented a quiet, refined appearance. Now there seemed to be something immoral about it, though it was impossible to say whether this effect came altogether from the suit, or whether it was partly due to the slanting way in which he had put on my straw hat. He made me think of a party who had once tried to get me to invest in a system for beating the races.

I was thinking over a reply that would suit the situation, when I saw a sight that made me suck in my breath through clenched teeth.

The intruder had gradually backed toward the window, and the morning sun threw his shadow onto the carpet. But though the serge suit and hat cast the usual black silhouette, the head and the two hands cast nothing at all. Where there ought to have been a shadow, there was not even a film. The carpet remained as bright as though the sun's rays filtered through clear glass.

"NOW I understand," I said when I had regained enough self-control to speak distinctly. "Ha-ha, it is a joke on me! I almost believed you were a real individual, the same as myself, and I do not know why I am speaking to you, because you do not exist. My friend, you are just an optical illusion, probably the result of indigestion, and I can prove it because you have not even got a shadow. Ha-ha!"

"Ha-ha yourself, Elroy," he replied in a grating voice. "Ha-ha while the ha-ha-ing is good. I'll get your shadow the same as I've already got your goat. Listen, did you ever hear of an optical illusion borrowing lunch-money? Watch me. There's a ten-dollar bill in the old wallet. Let's have it."

After making sure that the money in question and the hundred-dollar certificate of deposit were still in my billfold, I replaced the latter in my inner breast pocket and buttoned the flap.

"Kick in, Elroy. You wouldn't want your old pal to go without cigarettes, would you?"

"You are no old pal of mine," I stated firmly. "I never set eyes on you before."

"But still your pal, Elroy, still your pal. Look me over. What do you see?"
"A simple optical illusion," I said in a

determined voice.

"Elroy, get ready for a pleasant surprise. Look into the mirror with me."

DID so. And to say I received a I shock would be the same as saying that a man falling off a six-story building gets bumped. Line for line, feature for feature, the two faces reflected in the mirror were identical. The mysterious intruder and myself were as alike as two buffalo nickels.

"Now you know, Elroy. Open the old

wallet and produce the money."

"I don't understand what you are talking about," I said in a voice so low I could hardly hear it myself. "And I will thank you to leave the premises at once."

"Thank old Professor Upomenos, El-

roy. Don't thank me."

"What has Professor Upomenos to do

with you?" I asked.

"He showed you how to ask for me. You did, and here I am. Your Suppressed Comrade! Call me Suppy, Elroy. And hurry up with that lunch-money."
"But—"

"Santa Claus was on the job last night, Elroy. You hung up your spare nightie, and what did you find in it this morning but your little old Suppressed Comrade!"

I tried to say something but failed.

"Don't blush and cringe. I'm only all those suppressed success-impulses that you've been choking back ever since we were a boy. And now all those impulses clamor for a little shot of lunch-money. Be generous, Elroy, be generous."

"You claim," I said, after swallowing a couple of times, "that you are my Sup-

pressed Comrade."

"Elroy, do you think I'd look like this if I were anybody else's Suppressed Com-

rade?"

"Then all I have to do is to ask you for advice on any subject, and I can get the true facts of the case.

"Ask me, Elroy, ask me."

"All right, I will. What do I have to do to make a success in a big way, the same as has always been my ambition?"

"Very simple, Elroy. Your first step is to turn over that lunch-money."

I made up my mind that the time had come to take a firm stand. "You will not get one cent out of me," I stated, "until you can prove your claims."

"Duck soup, Elroy. How do you want

me to prove 'em?"

I walked to the window and looked out, meanwhile collecting my thoughts. Then I said: "If you are really my Suppressed Comrade, you know everything I do."

"Posositively, Elroy, posositively."

I faced him suddenly. "Then what is

in my billfold?"

Without an instant's pause he answered: "A hundred-dollar certificate of deposit, that ten-dollar bill, four threecent stamps, a snapshot of Miss Mullullet and her old lady, and a magazine ad we clipped last week about Success Through Diet. Hand over the ten, Elroy."

For a minute I felt staggered. But I would not give up, as I felt it possible that the party might have gone through

the billfold while I was asleep.

"That is no proof," I said coldly. "If you are really my Suppressed Comrade as stated, kindly tell me one thing I did yesterday. Just one thing."

"Yesterday, Elroy, in spite of my best efforts, you made a horrible ass of your-You could have kissed Julie Van Hulsteyn, and you didn't. Let's have the lunch-money."

THE laugh with which I greeted this remark sounded pretty hollow.

"There is just one real test," I said finally. "All my life I have been suppressing various success-impulses."

"Just like the village cut-up, Elroy. Only what he suppresses isn't the same kind of thing you've been suppressing. But cheer up. From now on yours are no longer suppressed. I'm them. Watch my exhaust. What's the test, Elroy?"

"There has been no proof so far," I repeated. "If you expect me to help you, there must be complete confidence between us. I must be sure that you are

what you claim to be."

He nodded. "I'll prove everything, El-I'll show you beyond doubt or question that though we're now separate existences, up to an early hour this morning I was your little Suppressed Comrade on the inside in more senses than one. Here goes, Elroy: you remember that novel we read last winter, the one swarming with British aristocrats?"

I remembered it very well indeed,

though I refused to encourage him by

saying aye, yes, or no.

"I see you do, Elroy. All right. The noble characters in that novel kept spicing their remarks with Latin quotations. We never told anyone, but oh, how we hankered to go through life wise-cracking in Latin! And here's where the dream comes true, beginning with the old Roman proverb first used when Pocahontas met Julius Cæsar. 'Poppus woloppus, Cæsar,' she said, meaning 'Yes, there is hope.'"

Saying this, with his right forefinger pointing upward in the position favored by Professor Upomenos, he took a step forward and stubbed his toe hard against the red plush-covered brick doorstop.

Immediately he changed, the way a purring cat changes when somebody steps

on its tail.

Leaping into the air, he came down in a crouching position. His eyes popped; his eyebrows snapped together; while his mouth, which had been smiling, switched to a snarl that showed even more teeth. He shook his fist at the brick, and with his voice rising to a shriek, addressed it substantially as follows:

"Omit that omit brick! Omit the man who made that omit brick! Omit the man who wouldn't get up at night and tear his omit shirt to strike an omit light to omit the omit man who made

that omit brick!"

While I was still dazed by these remarks, which I had not heard in their entirety since the time that my Uncle Henry's foot slipped when he was re-shingling the woodshed, my Suppressed Comrade, as he called himself, grabbed the brick and threw it out of the window into the gooseberry bush in the garden.

With his face as red as a ripe tomato, he now turned, and shaking his fist,

velled:

"Keep your omit ten dollars, Elroy, and a great big razzazzberry to you! If I can't get lunch-money one way, I'm just smart enough to get it another. Nothing suppressed, remember that!" And unlocking the door, he slammed it behind him.

DURING a long ten minutes I sat in the chair wondering whether I was awake or dreaming....

"Come in," I said as somebody tapped

at the door.

It was Ray Buckbee.

"Say, Elroy, I've got the old man's car, and I thought I'd take you to the

train and— Hello! What's happened? Did they postpone it? You sure changed your clothes in a hurry."

A sick feeling came over me. "What

do you mean, Ray?"

"You know what I mean, Elroy. A few minutes ago you ran into me on the street, all dressed up in your Sunday uniform. You said you were going to your aunt's funeral, and would I lend you ten of 'em for a railroad ticket."

"And did you, Ray?"

"You know I did, Elroy. What's the matter with you?"

I passed my hand over my head as if

thinking.

"It was all a mistake about my aunt's dying," I said. "She's still alive." Taking my last ten-dollar note from the billfold, I handed it over. "Thanks for the loan, Ray."

The sinking sensation at my stomach was the same as on the occasion of the last Y. P. A. S. picnic, when, after the hundred-yard race, I ate some watermelon and then added a caramel fudge sundae with chopped nuts on top.

I did not want to believe, but I could not help myself. There was no longer any doubt that the party who had so mysteriously appeared during the night was actually my Suppressed Comrade.

CHAPTER VI

THE fact that all day Monday and all Monday night no news of any kind had come from my Suppressed Comrade did not cheer me up in the least. If anything, it had the contrary effect.

For on Tuesday at two-fifteen Miss Mullet and her mother were due in Quantus. The principal reason why Miss Mullet had bestowed her affections on me was because of my spotless reputation. Now, with my Suppressed Comrade at large, there was no telling how spotless this would remain.

But my already anguished condition was rendered ten times worse during Tuesday's breakfast at the Elite Refectory by the conversation of the three other boarders at my table. They talked and shrieked with laughter, as though they had something on me in the nature of a side-splitting joke.

Miss Kester, the filing-clerk, began it. "Say, Mr. Simmons, you certainly gave the natives a taste of Old Home Week. I wish I'd been among those present

last night."



"Well, Simmons," he growled, "there seems to be a lack of pep in this department. If you can't get those estimates out on time, I'll find somebody who can and will!"

Amid a general guffaw Mr. Gorman, the hardware salesman, said: "Want to buy a good automatic, Elroy? A little thirty-two to scare 'em off?"

"Oh, yes, Innocence," said Mrs. Bowles, the music teacher, in answer to my direct question, "it's all news to you! Oh, yes! Oh, yes, indeed: I was there, standing right beside Julie Van Hulsteyn, when it all happened."

But try as I might, I could not get one single helpful answer out of the lot of

Still racking my brains in an effort to solve the mystery, I had started across the Wolf River Bridge when I saw Miss Van Hulsteyn herself coming from the opposite direction. Hoping for an explanation of the mystery, I slowed my steps, and taking off my hat in a pronounced manner, remarked in a preliminary way: "We are having wonderful weather, Miss Van Hulsteyn.

Instead of acknowledging my presence, she hurried past as though I were somebody she had never seen before and never wanted to see again. I reached the office in what might be called a daze.

"Ray," I said as I hung up my hat, "I want to ask you a certain question."

He looked up at me, and then throwing back his head, he laughed until he had to hold his right hand to his side. "Ask me! Why, Elroy, I thought you found out all you wanted to know last night."

"Please be serious, Ray," I said as my heart sank perceptibly at this greeting. "You know Miss Mullet and her mother are coming here today on the two-fifteen, and I am engaged to Miss Mullet—"

"Honest, Elroy?"

It was more and more evident that some atrocity had taken place for which I was being held responsible. I had just started to question Ray when the door opened, and Mr. Van Hulsteyn came in.

"Simmons," he said, "where is the bank-book?"

"I will look for it, sir."

"I don't want you to look for it, Simmons; I want you to find it." And he walked out with a bang of the door.

I knew I could not concentrate on my work until I had learned the true account of what had happened the night before.

"Tell me all, Ray, because I cannot seem to remember a thing," I urged.
"I'll bet you can't."

"Ray," I broke in, my voice trembling, "tell me the whole truth, and the sooner the better."

"Stop kidding, Elroy. You know well enough what you did at the Mortgage Festival, last night, of the First Consolidated Church."

"Ray, I give you my word of honor, I do not remember one solitary thing that occurred. Please tell me, Ray."

Looking me in the eyes, Ray shook his head and laughed again before answering. "You're certainly a card, Elroy—either the joker or the king of hearts. Here's the wáy it was passed to me: You breezed into the festival, asked what it was all about, hopped up on a box in front of the fortune-teller's booth and said: 'Girls, let's pay off the mortgage—I'm handling a superior quality. Line forms on the right. Drop your contributions in the brown derby.' And you started—"

"What did I start, Ray? What?"

"Elroy, you sold kisses to the dear girls at anything from a quarter to five bucks a throw, and by the time you finished, the committee had covered everything they owed and were forty-seven dollars in the clear. For a slow starter, Elroy, you shift into high plenty fast."

I reeled over to my desk.

How I kept on the job till one P. M., when, in honor of Old Home Week, all business shut down for the day, I do not know even now. Completing the figures on rechargeable-battery profits was one long-drawn-out agony. And as for the bank-book, I failed to find any trace of it. Every minute that brought the hour of two-fifteen nearer increased my worry as to how I would be able to keep the disgraceful facts of the night before from Miss Mullet and her mother. The problem was far from solved when at one-thirty I reached Mrs. Lammick's.

I had started up the stairs, with the idea of making a hasty toilet before meeting the train, when I perceived that somebody was already in the house, because the hall reeked of tobacco smoke. I threw open the door of my room.

Tilted back in a chair, his feet on the window-sill and a cigarette in one hand, sat my Suppressed Comrade. The Sunday blue serge was mussed, and my best hat had been tossed in a corner of the floor. On the middle of the bed lay a musical instrument case. At the squeak of the door-hinges my Suppressed Comrade turned his head and looked round with a pair of eyes bright and shining, like a rooster's.

FOR a moment I paused on the threshold, staring at him sternly. Then, when instead of offering apologies or other remarks, he turned back to the window and took another drag at his cigarette, I spoke. "I am waiting for an explanation," I said crisply. "I demand an explanation."

Very slowly he lifted his feet down from the window-sill, at the same time shooting the butt of his cigarette out into the garden.

"How do you like your explanations, Elroy? Written out, or on a talkingmachine record? Fried on both sides, or poached?"

I refused to be thrown off the track by this flip attitude. "I demand an explanation of the way you have been carrying on and getting me in wrong without any fault of my own. I demand the complete revolting details of what you did last night."

"You'll be delighted with the details,

Elroy. Simply delelighted."

"Oh, is that so!" I responded grimly.
"Do you remember, Elroy, how we used to sit alone in the gloaming, hankering and watching the other boys enjoy themselves? Last night, Elroy, several of those boyish hankers grew up and put on long pants."

WAS undecided whether to rush forward and try to choke him, or to delay action till he had confessed all.

"Come to the point," I snapped. "I am referring to your unspeakable conduct at the First Consolidated Church Mortgage

Festival."

"A wow, Elroy! One of our juvenile fancies come true. If you don't go collegiate from now on, it's your own fault. As I said to the boys around the table at three o'clock this morning—"

"What table? I demand to know just

what you are talking about."

"A card-table, Elroy."

I let out a scornful laugh. "If," I said,
"you are my Suppressed Comrade, as
repeatedly stated, you do not know anything about cards."

"Easy, Elroy. We always know the difference between an ace and a deuce. Anyhow, it wasn't a game of cards. It

was poker—draw poker."

"I demand an explanation," I said, choking. "A complete explanation."

"Buy a book, Elroy. That's the only way you'd get it. In my case, the technique came naturally. I like to remember that during the first two hours any time I drew cards, some generous soul would slip me a full house or four of a kind or a fistful entirely pink. All clean fun. A few regeggular people in one of the sweetest poker-sessions ever held in this part of the State. No checks, no chips, no I.O.U.'s—nothing but cash!"

I tried to make my voice steady as I asked: "You mean to say you played cards for money with my ten dollars?"

He blew curls of smoke through his

nostrils before replying.
"Yes and no, Elroy. We won't go into that: you might find the subject painful. Let's cultivate soul-repose by cleaving to happier memories. Item: I was agreeably surprised to learn that our little community bristles with live wires. Doc Linahan, the eminent veterinary surgeon, was there; and Nate Cullen, dispenser of automobiles; and Buck Wilmot, proprietor of the local tonsorial parlor.

I could not hide a shudder.

"That reminds me," went on my Suppressed Comrade, "our friend Ray Bucktooth stopped me on the street as I was coming home. After asking why I kept changing my clothes, he handed me a little valentine from the boss. To you, Elroy, with love and kisses."
I sat down on the bed. "A valentine?"

"In a manner of speaking, Elroy. friendly note. Catch! I opened it on the basis of all for one, and one for all. When I get my address-book started, I want you to feel free to reciprocate."

It was in Mr. Van Hulsteyn's personal penmanship and ran as follows:

Mr. Simmons:

Upon receipt of this communication, come at once to my house. What I have to say is of the gravest importance. Rodman R. Van Hulsteyn.

"Why the elongated face, Elroy?" "Mr. Van Hulsteyn has heard about what happened last evening at the First Consolidated Church Mortgage Festival," I replied bitterly. "Now it is up to me to explain your dastardly conduct."

"Tell him to comb the sand out of his whiskers. What else is pulling at the

corners of your mouth?"

S a matter of fact, this summons from A Mr. Van Hulsteyn upset my plans considerably, and it was necessary to make a quick decision. There was no use asking Ray Buckbee to help me out, because I knew he had been dated for a picnic. Little as I liked the idea of sending my Suppressed Comrade to meet the train, there seemed no other solution.

I stood up. "It is Miss Mullet and her mother," I explained. "They are coming to Quantus on the two-fifteen this after-

noon."

He sprang from his chair and shook my hand warmly. "Why didn't you say that at first, Elroy? I ask nothing better than to meet our little fiancée."

"What is the idea of saying 'our'?" I demanded. "I am individually engaged to Miss Mullet myself, and you had better remember it."

"I'll say I will, Elroy. But this is an emergency. Your emergency. Let's not waste time quibbibbling. Don't forget I have your best interests at heart. Later you'll tell me so with tears in your eyes."

As far as I could determine, his voice was sincere. I tried to put the gravity of the occasion in my voice as I said: "I am trusting you to do the correct thing in the case of both Miss Mullet and her mother."

"Consider it done, Elroy."

Leaping and skipping, as he whistled a melody of the day entitled, "Ask Me— I'll Tell You," he preceded me down the stairs.

Outside, the sun was bright. The day before, my Suppressed Comrade had made no shadow at all. Now, as he went down the walk, his hands and head cast outlines, as though the sun's rays were checked by at least a piece of heavy gauze; and when I looked at my own silhouette on the sidewalk, the hands and head, instead of standing out black like the hat and the rest of my clothes, seemed slightly faded.

CHAPTER VII

THE reason I came back to the room less than an hour after I left was simply because, when I reached the Van Hulsteyn residence on Greenway Court, Mr. Van Hulsteyn was not there.

"He sent for me," I explained to Mrs. Van Hulsteyn at the door. "I suppose he wishes an apology for my conduct at the First Consolidated Church Mortgage

Festival last night."

I was surprised to see her smile as, shaking her finger at me in an arch way, she interrupted: "Elroy, what an idea! We're all so enthusiastic about your dashing stunt. Julie pretends to have been shocked, but she was always such a peculiar child. Why don't you come in and tell us all about it? Everything!"
"Then what does Mr. Van Hulsteyn

wish to see me about?" I asked.

The smile vanished. "It's something else, Elroy. Rodman waited nearly an hour for you, very angry and excited. Then he rushed off in his car, leaving word for you to be back by four sharp. But come in; sit down and tell me all about the festival—you naughty boy!"

Because of my increasingly nervous state I refused the invitation as politely

as possible, and made all haste to return the way I came. As it was now too late to call off my Suppressed Comrade in the case of Miss Mullet and her mother, I hurried back to the house.

He had got there ahead of me. Propped up by pillows, he lolled in one corner of the bed, a banjo languidly

clasped in his hands.

"Did you hear it, Elroy? We always hankered to yodel to our own accompaniment. Look at the result. Original, very origiginal. 'Home boy makes good in big way.' Listen again, Elroy. Tell me if it gets you."

Laying his lighted cigarette on the iron piece under the mattress, he began to

yodel loudly.

There was nothing to be gained by trying to spare the party's feelings, so I did not even attempt same. "I demand to know," I said sharply, "the exact nature of this latest outrage you have perpetrated—concerning Mr. Van Hulsteyn." Then, remembering, I added: "I also demand to know why you did not meet Miss Mullet and her mother as promised?"

"Then sit down, Elroy, and wait without fidgeting. If we diagram the happenings in due order, everything can be explained satisfactorily. Now, doesn't this little melody cover it like a blanket?"

I had already taken my place on the cane-seated chair facing the bed before I realized that he was about to sing Though I started to say something, he drowned out my protest.

"Any little girl that will chat a little while

Is the little girl I'm looking for. Any little girl with a dimple and a smile Is the little girl I'm looking for. I've traveled from New York to London and to Cork;

I've picked them out at Chi and Singapore; But any little girl—"

I bounded from my chair. "Stop that caterwauling. Stop it at once. I am here for serious information, and I am going to get it."

"Sit down, Elroy; it's a long story." He yawned. "Last night at Peek Inn—"

A cold wave, beginning at my feet, rolled up front and back simultaneously. Though I had had no intention of sitting down, as a result of my knees hinging I unexpectedly found myself in the chair. "Do you mean to say you showed yourself at that notorious roadhouse? Why did you go there? I demand an explanation."



"One of our old hankers, Elroy, breaking out of its cocoon. Something to do between the festival and the poker fête. You'd have enjoyed it, Elroy. I thought of you all the time I was there."

"I am still waiting," I said grimly.
"As I warned you, it's a long story. Complicated, very complicated. And the banjo plays an important rôle. Do you remember, Elroy, how we used to sit in the gloaming and hanker as we heard the other boys beating out chords while the girls draped themselves about and giggled and gurgled their admiration?"

"Come to the point!" I snapped. "I'm doing better than seventy, Elroy. There I was at Peek Inn. The boy with the shoe-polish hair had laid down the banjo. I said to myself: 'Suppy, why not gratify this old hanker? Be popular. Be the banjo boy of your community."

It was with difficulty I remained in the chair. "You mean you stole it?"

"College prank, Elroy. Nothing more. Here it is. Try it yourself. You can get by on two chords. If you sing loud enough, one will do. Your two little fiancées will eat it up."

It was a minute before I was sure I had heard aright. "Do you mean to

say-

"Calm, Elroy. It was all the fault of that boy with the enameled hair. I was dancing with a little blonde and playing this dishpan and singing:

"Miss Mullet and her mother got off the train -and just then an inspiration came. Ten feet away was anonymous little girl who didn't seem to be having much fun. went over and kissed The Mullets her. . . are on their way back to Elm Center."



"I said to Lou and Lilly, 'Though my passion may be silly, You are both the secret idols of my hea-a-art--'

"That gave me the idea, Elroy."

I had wanted to interrupt before, but the words had refused to come. Now, gripping the sides of the chair, I managed to speak. "What idea? You mean you asked this person to marry you?"

"No, Elroy, I asked her to marry you.

Anyhow, I gave her your card."

"You had the audacity to give her one

of my cards?"

"Nothing audacious in the transaction, Elroy. She asked for it. Whence the idea glowed."

"What idea?"

"I'm coming to that, my boy! Don't you remember, Elroy, how we used to sit there in the gloaming and wonder how it would feel to be engaged to two girls at the same time?"

"I deny it," I said loudly. "And in any case, what do you expect me to say to Miss Mullet?"

"Don't raise your voice, Elroy. I hear as well as you do. You'll laugh when I tell you I'd forgotten all about Miss Mullet."

I could feel the perspiration forming under my hair. "Then what did you mean when you mentioned two fiancées?"

"Why, the little brunette, Elroy. She was the second. And what a brunette! Ravishing! Those eyes, Elroy! She thought she was interested in a big silkstocking man-till I handed her one of your cards. Five minutes later you were engaged to her too."

I caught hold of the front legs of the chair. "I demand an explanation," I

said mechanically.

"That girl is full of 'em, Elroy. She comes from an old Southern family with estates in Virginia. I've forgotten her monicker. The blonde's first name begins with Q or X or Z or one of those comical letters. Says she's cashier at Ye Olde Tea Shoppe. I envy you, Elroy. Kissable little cuties, both of them, and crazy about you. I saw to that, before I left with the banjo. And now is everything cleared up? I need sleep."

Loosing my grip on the legs of the chair, I sagged forward. "My future life is ruined," I said, talking to myself as much as to my Suppressed Comrade. "I can never hold up my head again among decent people." I straightened up. "But this is not explaining," I shouted. "You have not answered my questions as to what you did to get me in wrong with Mr. Van Hulsteyn. And I demand to know the details of what happened when you met Miss Mullet and her mother."

Rubbing out the burning end of his cigarette on the back of the bed, he yawned until it looked as if his arms

were coming off.

"They got here, Elroy."

"Did you meet them as promised?"
"Ask them, Elroy, ask them."

"What did they say?"

"They said a lot, Elroy. And then

they said it all over again."

"What happened? I demand to know what happened. In spite of my solemn warning, did you go and kiss her?"

"Miss Mullet or her mother?"
"Either of them—either of them."

Placing his left hand before his eyes, he shook his head. "No, Elroy, no. And please don't bring up that subject again."

"Then why don't you tell me what I want to know? Are they at the hotel, as directed? What about your solemn promise to do the right thing by me?"

His face seemed to brighten. "I did the right thing by you, Elroy. 'Do the right thing by Elroy,' I said to myself as they got off the train. And that's everlastingly what I did."

"They got off the train. Go on."

"And looked at me."
"What did you do?"

"I looked back and laughed. Like this —ha-ha."

"Why did you do that?"

"I was thinking of you, Elroy. It was in my power to play you a dirty trick. I laughed ha-ha, like this, and then said to myself: 'No, Elroy is my friend. I won't do anything low to affect Elroy's future.' Once more I laughed ha-ha—you get it?—and then an inspiration came. Ten feet away from me was an anonymous little girl who didn't seem to be having much fun. I walked over and gave her a kiss."

I dropped the banjo. "You did what?" "I walked over and smacked that un-

known little girl, Elroy."

ALL my muscles seemed contracting at the same time. I uttered a few words which were no more than hoarse sounds.

"Just a midsummer night's hanker, Elroy. How often, oh, how often we've passed unknown little girls on the street who didn't seem to be having much fun, and how often we've yearned to step up and slip them a little kiss."

I was still unable to speak coherently. "That's about all, Elroy. Right after that the Mullets began talking."

"Miss Mullet and her mother saw you committing this outrage?"

"They claimed they did."

"You have blighted a life's romance," I said bitterly. "How will I ever explain when I see them at the hotel?"

"You won't have to, Elroy. The two charter-members of the Anti-Joy League aren't at any hotel. They're on their way back to Elm Center. And now, Elroy, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to explain fully and clearly all about my meeting with old Van Whoopsadaisy. But I'm going to absorb a little much-needed sleep."

With this he turned his face into the

pillow and began to snore.

AD the alarm-clock not indicated three-forty-five, I would have awakened him and insisted on learning all, but there was no time for another long-drawn-out explanation if I expected to see Mr. Van Hulsteyn at four. With a last bitter look at my Suppressed Comrade, I left the room, slamming the door behind me.

It was Mr. Van Hulsteyn himself who answered the bell when I reached his residence. He seemed to be waiting for me. I knew at once something was decidedly wrong, because his bald head was as red as fire, and his face the same color. Instead of asking me to step in, he stormed over the threshold to bark out: "Well, well, Simmons? What have you to say for yourself, sir? Mr. Thacker of the First National Bank says they have no record whatever of the alleged

deposit."

"What—what deposit, sir?" I faltered. Mr. Van Hulsteyn became even red-"I don't suppose you have the effrontery, sir, to affirm that I did not meet you on Main Street this morning at half-past ten, and that when I said, 'Where is the bank-book?' you replied, 'I forgot and left it at the bank.' And I don't suppose you have the effrontery, sir, to deny that yesterday—Monday when I met you at the same place and at about the same time, and when I said, 'What are you doing here, Simmons?' you replied, 'I am buying some ink for the office.' And I don't suppose you have the effrontery, sir, to contradict my statement when I say that then and there, Monday morning, I gave you the bankbook containing one thousand eleven dollars in currency, and told you to deposit the sum in the bank."

"Mr. Van Hulsteyn," I replied firmly, "I did not deposit any money for you at the bank either yesterday or today."

"I suspected so; and the bank agrees with both of us. Well, well, young man, what did you do with it? Where is the money?"

There was no getting out of the obligation. I felt it necessary to give the complete secret history of my Suppressed Comrade, cost what it might, and had just started with describing the appearance of Professor Upomenos, when Mr.

Van Hulsteyn cut me short.

"I ask no long-winded explanations, Simmons. I want that one thousand eleven dollars, and I'm going to get it. You have until Friday at twelve noon to bring me the missing sum. If at that time it is not paid in full, I'll have you arrested, sir, and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. As for your position with the Van Hulsteyn Battery Works, consider that terminated at once. Never show your face in my office again. Never."

CHAPTER VIII

STUMBLED away from the Van Hulsteyn residence with fingers clenched and toes curling against the soles of my shoes. Not satisfied with having shattered my life's romance and blighted a good name beyond repair, my Suppressed Comrade had reached a climax by putting me in the position of a criminal and a felon! By no hook or crook could I get one thousand and eleven dollars from any bank or person in Quantus. My only possible hope was Aunt Paula, and unfortunately she was traveling in Europe without any fixed address. There was just one thing to be done, and that was to get in touch with my Suppressed Comrade at once. In case he refused to accept responsibility for his misdeeds, and attempted to soft-soap me or argue his way out, I made up my mind to slam into him with both fists.

I had rounded the corner of Greenway Court and Chippecotton Street, when I was confronted by a remarkable sight.

Ahead of me stood a party with long white whiskers who, at first glance, I took to be Dr. Spalsbury. On his head, however, instead of the customary plug hat, he seemed to be wearing a red turban. But this was not all. As often as anybody strolled by him, especially when it was a girl or lady, he passed a remark. I was too far off to hear what he said, but the persons addressed gave every evidence of considering these remarks comical in the extreme. It was only after coming within comparatively close range that I found I had been wrong in mistaking the party for Dr. Spalsbury. It was none other than my Suppressed Comrade, his face concealed behind a Santa Claus mask, white whiskers below and a

red cap above!

"Merry Christmas, Elroy!" he called out as I approached. "Does this look as if I were taking care of your best interests? Yes or no: speak quick! I picked up the mask from a table of Thursday's pageant material. It belongs to Mr. Seeberger, the proprietor of Seeberger's Toy Bazaar. I'm merely using it for him, thus protecting you, Elroy, from embarrassing questions. But don't thank me. Anything to help—that's my motto."

Though he deserved no consideration, I decided to give him a last chance to explain. Having cleared my throat, in order to keep from choking, I demanded:

"Where is that one thousand and eleven dollars? Tell me at once or take

the consequences."

Instead of showing the least sign of remorse or any similar emotion, my Suppressed Comrade replied in a tone so like the voice of Mr. Van Hulsteyn that

it left me at a loss:

"Simmons, the time has come for us to understand each other. Kindness and consideration seem to be lost upon you. Very well, sir, we'll adopt other tactics. I've had enough of your skulking and vicious habits of thought. There'll be a change, sir, or I'll know the reason why. (Hello, girlie: what do you want old Santy to bring you for Christmas?)"

This last remark, in an entirely different voice, was addressed to a dignified matron, who to my surprise giggled and

looked back.

WHILE I stood there, thrown off my guard by this double-barreled impudence, my Suppressed Comrade gripped my upper right arm, and before I could jerk free, was marching me down Chippecotton Street. As we walked, and while he continued speaking as though I had been guilty of some unpardonable crime, now and again he would chop short his remarks to me in order to get off a piece of impudence to some passing female. Unbelievably enough, the persons addressed, instead of blushing and calling for the nearest policeman, only laughed.

"If you have no consideration for yourself, Simmons, kindly cultivate a little for me, or I shall wash my hands of you, sir!" said my Suppressed Comrade.

As I doubled my fists, the grip on

my arm tightened.

"As a boy, Simmons, as an adolescent, as a young man, you sat there in the

gloaming, during twilight after twilight, nurturing ridiculous and even unspeakable plans. From time to time, sir, perhaps you have fooled yourself as you fooled others. You made yourself really think that your ambition in life was to be a sober-sided man of affairs. Secretly, Simmons, and you know it very well, sir, your ideal and idol was the village cutup, kidding the girls and getting away with it. And now, Simmons, you see the unhappy result of your folly. (Look out for Santy, baby. He's got eight dollars' worth of mistletoe and what-not.)"

I had almost decided to reply to this astounding charge when I remembered my sensible decision to let actions speak rather than words. Any logical argument directed against him would be useless.

"Yes, Simmons, the village cut-up with a roll in his pocket: that was your ambition. You noticed the village cut-ups had all the fun. Also all the girls. You watched them strutting their stuff, and you wanted to be just like them: Lively, quick on the trigger, no conscience but lots of compensation. And all the spending-money possible. Can you deny this, Simmons? You know you can't, sir."

THIS piece of impudence was more than I could bear. I had started to wrench loose, when I was stopped in my tracks by his next accusation.

"I suppose you'll have the audacity to remind me that I was there too. I admit it, sir: yes, I was there. But why? Only because in my suppressed state I had no choice and was merely a tool in your unscrupulous hands. When you played with the idea that some day you'd take the money Mr. Van Hulsteyn gave you to deposit, and carry it about for twenty-four hours in a sizable and impressive roll, what could I do, in my unprotected and helpless state? I was forced to assimilate your unprincipled and conscienceless hankerings! (Hello, sweetie! Give Santy your address and telephonenumber for his little black book.)"

I stood there so stunned as to be un-

able to speak or act.

"Did I direct your thoughts, Simmons, when I was the man inside? Could I even raise a voice in protest when you sat there in the gloaming with a hanker to be like the rest of the boys? To horn in on poker-sessions with society's outcasts? To watch the stakes wax from penny-ante stuff to important money? Was I in a position to object when you pictured yourself, after a night at the

gaming-table, coming home, your pockets stuffed with your ill-gotten gains?"

"If I ever thought of any of these actions," I said, surprised to find myself talking instead of resorting to brute force, "it was in a purely playful spirit."

"Playful, Simmons! And you suppose when you say that word 'playful,' you excuse everything! Very well, sir; it may interest you to know that when I took that thousand and eleven dollars from Mr. Van Hulsteyn and kept it, the action was performed in a spirit of pure playfulness. Right after it happened, I began to laugh; and people turned to look at me as I walked down the street laughing—laughing—laughing." His eyes glared at me through the holes in the "You hankered to be a sport, Simmons; you hankered to smoke cigars, drink forbidden liquors, gamble and risk all on the turn of a card. And because, in my helpless way, I followed out these vicious hankerings, you have the audacity to criticize me."

I had just taken a long breath, prepatory to responding at length, when my

Suppressed Comrade snapped:

"I suppose you never realized, Simmons, when you were hankering away in the gloaming, that a man who plays

poker may lose as well as win."

For the first time the full horror of the situation dawned on me. I could not keep myself from stepping in front of my Suppressed Comrade and bringing him to a full stop. "Do you mean to say," I cried, "that you took that one thousand and eleven dollars and lost it all in a game of poker?"

SIDESTEPPING and starting again down Chippecotton Street, he stroked reflectively the long white whiskers of his mask.

"Gentlemen, Simmons, do not go in for post-mortems. You and I, I trust, are gentlemen. Remember, Simmons, this was done in your interest so you could have a permanent roll all your own."

"What happened?"

He shook his Santa Claus head from side to side. "If it hadn't been for this hollow hankering of yours, Elroy, to drink things from tall glasses, I might be able and willing to retail the game's details, here and now. (Christmas morning, silk sandwich, I'll be seeing you!)... At three-thirty A. M. the table was so littered with greenbacks in a single pot that it looked like a convention of bullfrogs. In the final showdown, one of the

town's pariahs and myself fought it out between us."

"Who won?" I demanded eagerly.

"That's where the fog comes down, Elroy," he answered, scratching his red cap. "The only undisputed fact is that, thanks to your unbridled imagination, something happened to old Van Hulsteyn's thousand-odd. And I want to know what you're going to do about the future?" He stopped and shook his fist in my face as he practically yelled: "Answer me, Simmons! Remember I've reached the point where good nature ceases to be a virtue. Either you make me a solemn promise to go straight from now on, or we part company for good and all, and I leave you to the punishment of the law, which you have so richly merited. (Smile, you red-hot mamma, smile! Oh, what Santy's got for you!)"

BY now the conversation had become so twisted that it was difficult to know what I had better say, but the fact of Mr. Van Hulsteyn's money overshadowed every other consideration.

"You said that one reason you got into that poker-game was to help me out?"

"Right, Elroy."

"And you've repeated two or three times that you want to be friends?"

"I hope, Elroy, you can't imagine two people as closely related as we are be-

ing anything else?"

I breathed abdominally three times in "If the one a concentrative manner. thousand and eleven dollars isn't returned to Mr. Van Hulsteyn, it's going to be very hard for both of us-and especially for me," I added hastily. "Isn't there anything that could be done to get it back?"

"You're making a formal request of

me, Elroy?" "Yes-s."

He scratched the pink forehead of the mask. "Well, Elroy, after thinking it all over, I'll admit there's something that can be done, and that will be done. Where is that little nest-egg we were saving for a rainy day?"

Before I could object, he had yanked the billfold out of my pocket, extracted the one-hundred-dollar certificate of deposit, and slipped a fountain pen be-

tween my fingers.

"Endorse here, Elroy, and remember you're doing it of your own free will. (Busy, Kittens; see you December twenty-fifth or sooner!) And now, Elroy, all This amazing yarn of Elroy and his double continues joyously in the next, the July, issue.

you have to do is to wait. I promise you nothing, but you may be surprised."

The whole thing happened so fast that he had slipped the endorsed certificate into his own pocket before I regained my self-control.

"What are you going to do with that one-hundred-dollar certificate of deposit?" I asked as soon as I could speak. "How do you expect to invest it so as to get back one thousand and eleven dollars before Friday noon, which is the dead-line set by Mr. Van Hulsteyn? Also what action do you expect to take in the case of my position, which I have now

permanently lost?"

"Elroy, I'll be absolutely frank with you: In the first place I expect to have dinner. Next I'll amuse myself till eleven o'clock. At that hour some of the real people in Quantus will pick me up and take me to a cocking-main schededuled for this night and date, somewhere between here and Pell City. Quantus banties and Pell City roosters. I'll shoot the roll on the first main, parlay it on the second, and so on, dittoing till it's so high a chicken couldn't fly to the top. Am I perfectly clear, Elroy? If you have anything to say, out with it like a little man."

Such was the effect on me of this outrageous proposal that I was unable to pronounce a single articulate word.

"Don't gag and mumble, Elroy. And stop brooding about your misspent past. Think about our future. That's all you can do now, anyway. Remember the old saying: See a pin and pick it up; all that day you'll have good luck. There's one now. Get it, Elroy; you'll be surprised."

I bent over, looking for the pin.

ALMOST immediately I straightened up with a cry of anguish, my right hand pressed to the place where the

shock had occurred.

"One more dream come true, Elroy! How many times in the dear dead days beyond recall we wanted to kick ourself. And there we are! And what a good swift kick it was! A world's record, Elroy. (Tut-tut, honey girl, no secrets from Santy—especially when you've got him interested.) And now, Simmons, you've had your lesson. Profit by it, sir, profit by it."

And before I could snap out of my dazed condition, he was hurrying down a side-street, a lighted cigarette extending from the red, parted lips of the mask.

A moving drama of the Cape Horn windjammers.

By WILLIAM OUTERSON

RAY dawn revealed the Cape Horn sea running from the west in windy ridges, the hollows sheeted in mottled white, the crests a mass of tumbling foam. Volleys of driven spray, swift as arrows, swept in level lines across the ship; seas crashed against her bows and broke over, blows that made her tremble, filling her decks with rushing water that gushed away through clanging ports. On this ninth day of the gale the barque was hove to under fore and main lower topsails, her wheel lashed to port, and a weathercloth in the mizzen rigging to keep her head up.

The men of the watch huddled together on top of the forward house, in the lee of the lifeboat, cursing the sea and the ship and the roaring wind. They were wet to the skin, cold, hungry and exhausted, their fingers split with gaping sea-chaps from much handling of brine-soaked ropes. Standing apart from his mates and facing forward, one man kept lookout. As her head flung upward on the crest of the seas he scanned the wild waste ahead, and on either bow, for the sight of a ship, the loom of land, or the ghostly glare of ice. So far as he could



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Men Can Beat the Sea

see, they tossed alone in this world of storm, though his vision was blurred by the lashing spray, which stung his eyes and brought a savage growl from his throat, the only defiance left to one

grown weary of curses.

Behind the weathercloth on the poop the skipper stood with the mate. Clad in thigh boots, belted rubber overcoats and sou'westers, they swayed to the violent movement of the ship, their left hands gripping a shroud of the mizzen rigging, their tired eyes ringed with the salt of dried sea-foam. Heedless of the reeling deck, a madness of motion to which they had long been used, they gave their attention to the ship, alow and aloft, to the drift scudding past the swinging mastheads, the white fury of the charging seas, and the shouting wind from the west. Nothing escaped their watchful eyes—a frayed end of ropeyarn fluttering on the fore royal yard, a loose gasket, or the play of the rigging as she rolled in labor aweather and alee.

As day advanced, a wider circle of sea and sky became visible. Overhead, a thinning and lifting of the flying scud drew it slowly clear of the mastheads, and the men knew this for a sign that the gale was abating. In their hearts they were more than glad; but a falling wind meant the heavy labor of setting sail, and their gloomy faces, sardonic by habit and circumstance, showed no pleasure as they observed the sea going down,



experience could accomplish it and the skipper considered what was hest to be done.

there, and the easing of the ship's motion. She had stopped taking heavy water over the rail, the spray no longer lashed clear across her, and the scream of the wind had subsided to a rough bluster.

"We ought to sight Diego Ramirez pretty soon," said Scotty. "Then we'll swing her head to the north and run for fine weather."

The wind fell steadily, and all sail was crowded on in the anxious effort to make westing and get out of the bad weather, with the exhausting labor, the cold, the wet, and the other evils attending it. Good luck seemed coming to them at last, after their five weeks' battering off the Horn, for the sky cleared and the sun slanted down on them, a welcome sight to men who had not seen it for over a month. The skipper made an observation at noon, worked out his position and found they were near the rocky masses of Diego Ramirez, which they sighted that afternoon. When the wind from the west died away, a fresh breeze came up from south and east, and they trimmed the yards to it, laying their true course. Driving cheerily past the rugged outposts of the Horn, they swung her head to the northward, squared away and ran before the wind for fine weather.

"The old sun feels fine," said Larry. "Things look different when he's on

deck."

"We'll get too much of him before we

reach 'Frisco," said Frenchy.

"I aint worryin' about what's comin' another time," Duff remarked placidly. "The sun's shinin', the wind's behind us, and we've weathered old Cape Stiff.

That's enough for now."

Chips sounded the hold at noon, according to routine, and found only a few inches of water in the hold, little more than the usual wash in the bilges. Leaving the gloomy region of the Horn astern, the ship ran joyfully on her way to sunny seas, whose pleasant breezes would lull the memory of bleak skies and savage tempests. The men no longer crouched in a huddled group on top of the forward house, but moved cheerily about the decks putting them shipshape, tautening up the ropes that stretched as they dried, unraveling the tangled lines, throwing down and re-coiling the sodden braces.

The wind came leaping from the south, blowing stronger every minute, and the ship raced on before it. But the rising sea and the heavy swell from the recent gale made an ugly jumble of water, in which the *Selburn* pitched and rolled distressingly, putting immense and continual strains on her old steel hull, which was no longer able to endure them. For thirty years she had battled with storms on all the seas of the world.

Having brought his ship safely round the Horn, and sunk the Diego Ramirez into the sea astern, the weary skipper went below to snatch an hour of sleep, but he awoke before long, knowing that all was not well, and lay for a minute feeling the motion of the ship. Her action was not as lively as it ought to be, he thought. She was too sluggish. He rolled stiffly from his bunk, fighting the starving desire for sleep, dressed swiftly and went through the saloon to the foot of the companion steps, where he met the mate on his way down. Their eyes met in grave understanding.

"She's takin' water, sir," the mate reported. "Chips reports three feet in the

hold."

"Send the watch to the pumps, and tell the carpenter to report the depth of water every hour," directed the skipper quietly. "After the heavy weather off the Horn, this cross sea puts hard strains

on the hull."

There were fourteen men before the mast, seven in each watch, and one had to take the wheel, which left six for the work at the pumps, hardly enough to drive them at high speed for two-hour Besides being few in number they were worn down to less than their normal strength by the long weeks of battle through which they had passed. In addition to the able seamen there were the captain and two mates, the bos'n, carpenter, sailmaker, lamp-trimmer, steward and cook, twenty-three men all told, most of whom might be required to take a trick at the pumps if they were needed there.

T the end of the first hour, the car-AT the end of the most and nine penter reported three feet and nine inches of water in the hold, and the skipper nodded without comment. the ship was sinking under them on this wild and stormy sea, it would be immensely difficult, if not impossible, he thought, to lower the boats and make to safety in that way. The boats were old and not entirely seaworthy, and in getting them over the side one or more would almost certainly be lost, smashed against the side of the ship or capsized, and men would be lost with them. Granting they got safely away, how long would they live in these raging waters, even if he and the mates and the bos'n were expert boatmen, which they were not? An open boat in a sea like this, unless handled with consummate skill, would be swamped in no time, and all

her company drowned. Better to stay by the ship, he decided, with the chance of running on a sheltered beach somewhere among the islands of Tierra del Fuego. It was possible that during the next hour the pumps might gain on the leak, though intuition and experience told him there was little likelihood of that. The ship was old, wind and sea were rising wickedly, and he suspected that the leak would increase as time went on. Night was approaching.

The lives of officers and men must be saved if human skill and experience could accomplish it, and he considered what was best to be done. Long ago, in the days of his boyhood, he had been cast adrift from a foundered ship, whose boats had skirted these islands in weather that was moderate for this region, and found a haven in the lee of London Island, a few miles south of Cockburn Channel, the western entrance to the Strait of Magellan. He knew that part of the coast, but London Island lay a hundred and fifty miles to the north-west, twelve hours' run at their present speed, and the ship was sinking under them. Cook Bay was not more than half of that, eighty miles at the most, and he had heard there were many sheltered beaches along its inner shores, though he did not know the lay of the land thereabout. But he knew his present position almost to a mile and felt certain he could make an accurate land-Having reached his decision, he turned to give the mate the change of course, which was due north for Cook Bay, but halted and stared at an open boat tossing on the crest of the sea a mile or more off the starboard bow.

She was heading straight for the ship, breasting the tempestuous surges under a slender strip of canvas, and the skipper noted with surprise and a fleeting twinge of pity that the man in her sternsheets was all the crew she carried. That she was a ship's lifeboat he knew at once, and he wondered why she was thus forlornly cruising on the wild sea with a solitary man aboard. Admiration stirred him as he realized the nature of such a voyage, the constant menace of the leaping crests, the need for ceaseless vigilance, the sure hand on the tiller, the exact spread and set of the sail. No single moment of sleep or slackness had been known by the skipper of that brave little craft.

She was visible only when boat and ship rose on a crest at the same time, and the next view he had of her, she had swung round and was running before the wind, closing in to draw alongside. Giving the mate a sharp order to stand by and take her painter, the skipper watched the activity on deck, and the approach of the boat, observing the excitement of the men as they lined the lee rail and She came alongside, and her waited. man stood up and hove the painter aboard as a wall of broken water lifted him level with the rail and threw the boat against it. He could not possibly fend her off, and made a weak effort to leap across the rail, but stumbled and pitched over, falling supine on the deck, where he lay inert and senseless. The boat's painter came taut and towed her alongside, but a curling crest flung her vicently against the ship, smashing in her gunwale and wrecking her.

THEY cast off the painter, and the broken boat sank.

Hastily lifting the unconscious man, they carried him to the cabin, laid him on the settee and gave him rum with a spoon, the skipper looking on. He had not yet changed the course, because a message of some sort had come to him, thrown across the wind and the angry sea by the lone castaway whose starving body lay before him. His cheekbones protruded gauntly, his eyes were sunken and his cheeks hollow, and the men who carried him aft declared he was a mere bag of bones and weighed no more than a baby. The skipper could see that this was near the truth, and he waited to hear the young man's tale, which was characteristic of the sea. There were nine shipwrecked men dying of cold, hunger and exhaustion on a shingle beach of London Island, having arrived there after weeks of wandering among the islands of Tierra del Fuego; and this young seaman, Mackenzie, who had been a North Sea fisherman and could handle a boat, had volunteered to sail to the south, into the track of Cape Horn vessels, in the forlorn hope of sighting a ship and obtaining help for his ship-

The skipper was faced with a cruel dilemma. He knew London Island, but had already decided not to risk such a long run with his ship in a sinking condition. Could he endanger the lives of twenty-four men to save nine? For his own part he would willingly take the chance, and he could answer for the officers, but not for the men. The only

fair course, as he saw it, was to leave the decision to the entire ship's company, and as time pressed he at once sent for all hands except those on duty. When they had crowded into the cabin and stood waiting for him to speak, he explained the situation very simply and asked what they elected to do, to pump a sinking ship at the risk of their lives across a hundred and fifty miles of this stormy sea, and save nine castaways—or make the safe short run to Cook Bay and let the nine men die.

"Make a try for them blokes, sir," was the immediate answer, spoken by one and confirmed by all the others.

Night had fallen, but the wind was southerly and the sky was brilliant with stars. The men left the cabin. Mackenzie was being carefully fed by the steward, and the skipper made his calculations easily, as he knew the ship's position within a mile or two, having worked it out at noon. Returning to the poop he ordered the mate to change the course to northwest-by-west, watched the ship swing to that, and went to the head of the ladder to meet Chips, who reported four feet and six inches of water in the hold, an increase of nine inches per hour in spite of the pumps.

THE ship was driving along with every stitch of canvas set, the wind two points on her port quarter, which allowed every sail to draw its best, and gave a speed of fourteen knots, according to the patent log over the stern. But this would decrease as her hull sank lower in the water, and he reckoned her average run for the next twelve hours at twelve and a half knots. He hoped the wind would not blow much stronger, fearing that some of the lighter sails might carry away, and he dared not take them Every square foot of canvas was needed to drive the ship along, and the loss of a single royal might make the difference between life and death. He could only carry on and hope the sails would hold, that he had laid the right course, and that dawn would come before they drew too close to the rugged coast of London Island. The spray was lashing across the poop, and seas were pouring over the rails at the waist, but were not yet heavy enough to interfere seriously with the work at the pumps.

In the night time, when a lookout had to be stationed on the head, only five men were available for pumping, and the bos'n made the sixth during the mate's watch. Later, when the wind had risen to a hard gale, a second man was required at the wheel to keep the ship straight before the monstrous sea that was running, and the skipper called all hands on deck, reducing the pumping spell to one hour for each crew. This arrangement would provide a full force throughout the night, barring accidents, and, by giving relief every hour, enable the men to endure the grinding labor of pumping until they beached her, or foundered.

The men off duty were resting on the fore hatch, talking about Mackenzie's courage and skill with a boat, and the sufferings of his mates and himself on the naked shingles of that desolate coast. Their own danger did not greatly disturb them, since they passed their lives amid the perils of the sea, and the challenge in the situation stimulated them. It was a trial of strength and endurance between the sea and themselves. As the skipper had said: "She'll make her landfall, if you keep her afloat. If you don't, she'll founder."

"We've got to put her on the beach,"

said Scotty.

"The sea don't care a damn what we want to do," declared Larry.

"No, it don't," agreed Nibbs. "But

we can beat the sea.'

"The sea always wins," said Frenchy. "How d'you aim to beat it?"

"We're men," cried Scotty.
"That's right," said Duff. . . .

At four bells in the first watch, six men went aft to relieve the pumping squad, and the mate instructed them to take their places without reducing the speed. While they were changing, she shipped a heavy sea at the waist, right beside them, which flooded the deck and carried away two of the men who had not found a hold. The others continued working, with white water swirling about them as the ship heaved and rolled, keeping their grip on the handles and somehow contriving to drive them round at high speed. When the water had partly cleared, one of the missing men returned and took his place, but the other could not be found in the darkness, and Lamps completed the crew. The mate, ranging about the decks in spite of heavy water, found the lost man behind the spar that was lashed alongside the rail, one or two of his ribs broken; he was carried to the cabin, where the skipper and the steward did some rough surgery.



The injured man having been attended to, the skipper returned to the poop and stood at the taffrail, grave and thoughtful. Casting his gaze aloft in the clear starry darkness, he inspected each sail with wise experienced eyes, his survey lingering on royals and topgallants. The royals were holding well, bellied outward in hard curves by the roaring pressure of the wind, and he had hopes that they would stand, although the masts bent forward with their weight, and the backstays drew taut as bowstrings. As for the topgallants, they were made of the stoutest canvas, but they were single, deep sails of large area, and carried a heavy load. None of the other sails gave him any anxiety, and the running gear was all in first-class order. His eyes dropped to the decks again, and he prayed that the sea would rise no higher, as the ship was becoming ever more sluggish in her movements, the stern lifting tardily in the scend and falling deadly into the trough. If she began to poop, he reflected, they were lost, and he glanced forward at the dim figures of the men, straining every tissue at the pumps.

The pump-handles were fixed to two flywheels at each side of the main taffrail, and between the flywheels were two cranks attached to plungers, which made a clanking sound, dreary and ominous, as they rose and as they fell, and the ship rushed along in her staggering race with death. As time passed, the sea broke more frequently over the rail, monstrous floods of water that swept the men off their feet, forcing them to cling to the handles, which stopped revolving until they recovered their footing. Night enclosed them in a bright darkness, through which the crests of the seas gleamed snowy white, but they no longer kept watch on these, all their energies centered on driving round the pumps to keep the ship afloat. The wind blustered through the rigging with elemental force, the spars creaked alarmingly, the backstays hummed like 'cello strings. Fully aware was every man that their failure to drive the pumps fast enough would surely give the victory to the sea.

AT six bells of the first watch, an unusually large sea came over, flooding the decks; when it had rolled away there were only three men at the pumps, doing their best to carry on at the required speed. The two mates scouted in search of the others and found them, unconscious and nearly dead, their lungs

full of water and their bodies variously bruised. Thankful that they had not gone over the side, the officers took them into the cabin, where the steward and second mate expelled the water from their lungs but could not restore them to consciousness. Sails, Lamps and a seaman took their places, and the pumping went on, but accidents continued to happen, because the men were worn out by toil and privation off the Horn and unable to save themselves. Before eight bells in the same watch, Lamps lost his footing and slid to the deck, where the iron pump-handle struck him on the head and laid him senseless. Sails was nearly seventy, and the unaccustomed toil added to his frequent immersions in icy water soon broke him down, though he stuck gallantly to his post to the limit of his endurance.

It seemed a losing fight, for at two bells in the middle watch, excepting the skipper, the two mates, Chips, the steward and the cook, all of whom had other essential duties to perform, there were only six men aboard the sinking Selburn able to man the pumps: the bos'n, Larry, Scotty, Frenchy, Nibbs, and Duff. It was noteworthy that these had met with no accidents, except for being soused under boarding seas from time to time, and had never lost their grip, however heavy the deck water, although none of them was of big or massive build. Bos'n was five feet nine, slim waisted and broad shouldered, alert and swift as a panther; Larry did not quite reach the bos'n's height, and was lighter but wiry, almost tireless; Scotty and Frenchy were about five feet nine and a half; Nibbs was a full inch shorter and looked fat, but on closer inspection proved to be all muscle; Duff was bigboned, lean and powerful, tallest of the six by an inch. All of them possessed marvelous powers of endurance.

They pumped and pumped, and the seas came over and buried them, but they held fast and pumped again as soon as they got their heads and shoulders above water; yet every hour the ship sank lower in the sea. The cook prepared a sumptuous meal of the best food in the lazarette, and the two mates and Chips relieved the pumping squad, three at a time, while they ate and had a smoke, for which they were allowed thirty minutes. No grog was served. Thus fortified with the best food they had eaten aboard the Selburn, and the only real coffee they had tasted since

leaving port, they worked like giants refreshed, and the clanking of the pumps seemed not so dismal in their ears.

The lonely skipper stood through, most of the night at the taffrail, making an occasional trip along the bridge to the top of the after deck house, to look down at the toiling men below and wonder, in his aloof impersonal way, if they could possibly endure till the end. If some of them failed through accident or exhaustion, the officers and tradesmen would have to take their places. Neither of the two men at the wheel could be spared, for they were expert steersmen and kept the ship on a straight line, with slight deviations unavoidable in such a sea, and their work was just as important as pumping. The straighter she ran the sooner she would reach her destination, and time was the essence of the contest. Of no less importance was the man on lookout, as they were nearing the coast, running at a sharp angle toward it, and keen eyes were needed to watch ahead and give warning in plenty of time, lest they dash her against the cliffs.

Now and again the mate mounted the poop ladder and stood beside him for a minute, and it was in the skipper's mind that his chief officer wanted to suggest giving rations of grog to the men at the pumps, but this he would not do. He knew too well the disastrous effects of alcohol under such conditions. When the job was done, if they made the land in time, they could have all the rum they wanted, but not a drop before then.

Amid the vast tumult of wind and sea and straining ship, the clanking of the pumps became the dominant note in the life of the crew, the sign and evidence of her beating heart, and each time the skipper went forward to the top of the house he was more deeply impressed, wondering how men could stand up, hour after weary hour, under such bitter labor. Four bells! Six bells! Eight bells in the middle watch. Two bells, four bells in the morning watch, and another hour till daybreak. One hour from dawn, and the same six men toiling at the pumps.

Clank—clank—clank. Round and round went the flywheels, up and down went the plungers, sucking out of the ship the sea that would sink her. The men worked with their heads down, unmindful of anything but the clanking of the pumps, their muscles dead to all but the pain of movement. Under low-

ered lids their eyes were dull and sunken, but the spirit within them was living flame, imperishable. They were set to beach the ship and save those nine unhappy seamen, and they would do it if they died in the moment of achievement. Clank—clank—clank—clank.

"Daybreak."

THE skipper's lips moved in a sound-less whisper, yet it seemed to him he had shouted aloud in triumph and exultation. Eastward he saw in dim outline a range of snowy mountains against the paling sky. Hope like a ripened bud burst suddenly into flower, and he moved over to the lee side, gazing intently across the tempestuous sea. His vision was barred from time to time by mountainous surges, vast walls that heaved up before him as the ship wallowed in the trough, but following crests bore her slowly upward again, and his eyes ranged keenly along the forbidding coast, seeking the landmark he knew.

There! Just for a moment he sighted a headland that seemed familiar, but immediately his view was hindered by a roaring crest, and he waited endless seconds until the stern lifted again. He was ready then, looking in the right direction, and almost directly ahead he saw the loom of London Island. Taking the compass bearings, he went aft and stood beside the weather wheelman to pilot the

ship to safety.

The main deck was nearly level with the sea, and the race was not yet won, but the wind kept driving her on, and the six men at the pumps seemed to be working a little faster. It had been shouted in their ears that land was in sight, and this had spurred them to the last supreme effort. Remaining beside the wheel, the skipper conned the ship through the dangerous waters that raged between her and the desired haven. Straight ahead, the coast was clearly visible in the gray light of dawn, a perilous shore of lofty cliffs and enormous boulders, against which the surf broke with booming shocks that came to the ship and mingled with the clanking of the pumps. Masses of white water were tossed far up the face of the rock, and at the point toward which they were heading, the raging backwash rushed back to meet the oncoming breakers.

Into this inferno of churning water the *Selburn* drove with a brave burst of speed, and as she entered it her decks were filled to the rail, foam hissing aft to the feet of the skipper. The solid mass of water weighed her down intolerably, and the skipper feared she would founder in sight of safety, her gallant struggle naught but lost endeavor. But in mortal labor she rose again, and the skipper heard the clanking of the pumps.

Thank God for those six men, he thought, and cried to the wheelmen to put the wheel hard down. They spun the spokes with right good will, and stared in amazement. The ship swung round behind a lofty cliff to port and entered a cove of unbelievable calm. Her keel ground along a shingly bottom and she came to rest so near a cliff on the starboard side that her yardarms touched the rock and held her on an even keel.

"That'll do the pumps!" cried the

skipper.

"That'll do the pumps!" roared the

mate, and the clanking ceased.

The six men came to a slow halt and gazed blindly about them, stumbled away from the pumps and collapsed on the main hatch.

"A close call," muttered the bos'n. "The sea didn't get us this time,"

Larry groaned.

"It always does, in the end," wailed Frenchy.

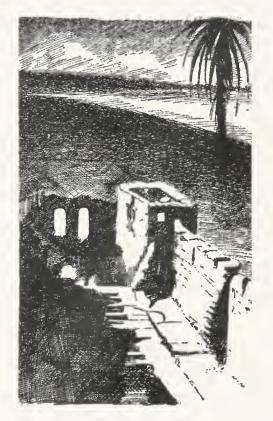
"Not always." Duff's voice was barely audible.

"We're men," moaned Scotty. "We can beat the sea."

"That's right," said Nibbs.

In the eyes of the lonely skipper, deep sunk in his haggard face, a clear light glowed, from duty done and judgment justified. Remote, reflective, he gazed at the helpless men on the hatch and wished he could say how much he admired them as sailors and shipmates. Glancing landward, he saw Mackenzie's nine companions, gaunt and desperate, coming down the cove, stumbling and falling on the shingle, helping each other, their faces lit with wonder at the miracle of a ship. He would restore them with food and shelter, and tomorrow, when all hands had been fed and rested, they would lower the boats and make for Punta Arenas, through the narrow waters of Magellan Strait. . .

Regret that was unavailing dimmed the light in his eyes as he surveyed his stranded ship, banished from all the winds of the sea. Her briny decks lay rigid and lifeless, her wheel stood silent and deserted, her sails hung motionless. On this far shingle of the lonely world she had reached her journey's end.



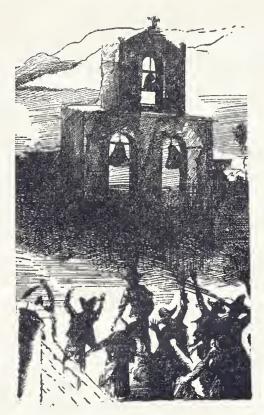
The Bells

An unusual story of adventure in a romantic and colorful land which sometimes turns toward you a terrible face.

OD remembered what the Spanish doctor from Oaxaca had told him —that Mexico was a rich, colorful and romantic land, but that sometimes it turned toward you a terrible face. Rod had smiled a little at the time. He had been in Mexico nearly a year, and he hadn't glimpsed that sinister face yet. But now he wasn't so sure. Was the face the Oaxaca doctor had spoken about, being turned toward him at last?

At first the furry-legged spots had swarmed before his vision like tarantulas. Rapidly they had grown. In a while so little of the landscape of interior Mexico was left between them that he could scarcely make out his saddle mule's ears. Not until then did he become convinced that something was

blinding him.



of Schicalli By CONRAD RICHTER

Illustrated by Paul De Leslie

He decided it wasn't so much the glare of the sun on the glittering white desert today as it had been the choking storm of yesterday afternoon. The fine gypsum sand had inflamed his eyes so that he could scarcely sleep. When he had finally dropped off, he had wakened to find himself violently rubbing the distended membranes. Today the countless tiny beams of reflected white fire were finishing the tragedy.

He pulled off his shirt and tied it over his face with the sleeves. When he bared his face later to look out, it had grown dark, though he could still feel the sun beating down on him. The darkness and the feel of the sun together were a frightening sensation. His eyes throbbed like swollen Mixetal drums. He was glad his mozos weren't along to see their dire

prophecies fulfilled.

Their unassailable logic at Maricoma several days before, he very well remembered. Why risk your life at Ichicalli, they argued, when everybody knew that Ichicalli didn't want you? If you managed to escape the desert of white sands, the white bruja or priestess would bewitch you. And if you escaped both the white sands and the priestess, the hostile Ichiquerrecs were as likely as not to cut out your heart with an opal knife, and lay it on the lap of their idol, like their ancestors the ancient Aztecs.

THIS Rod had ridiculed. Didn't their own respective tribes have idols that they kept hidden when the padre called? Wasn't it the practice of their own tribes to lay still-beating hearts before their idols? But the hearts were not men's hearts, but the hearts of quail and chicken. So it probably was with the Ichiquerrecs. And the white priestess was probably no more than the child of some white Mexican or perhaps American parents who had been stricken in Ichiquerrec territory.

But his *mozos* had clung to the safety of Maricoma like an Indian bride to her new husband, and that had been that. Right now Rod admitted that his Mexican boys would have come in handy to turn the head of his mule back toward Maricoma until his eyes were well again. If in his blindness he tried it, he might send her off the trail to an inevitable death for them both. On the other hand, if he succeeded in returning blinded to Maricoma, his *mozos* would fairly burst out of their jackets with, "I told you so!"

The truth was, he didn't want to go back to Maricoma yet. He was Rodney Walcott, intense, yellow-haired, blue-eyed young field representative of the American Foundation. He had planned to give his life to Mexican research. He had always wanted to know more about the famous native priestesses who had exerted such a powerful influence over Mexican affairs—the noted insurrection at Cancuc in 1712, and at Chamula in 1868. Now he had a marvelous opportunity to study at first hand a reputed living tribal priestess. And he was not going to let that chance slip by, blindness or no blindness. He was the sort of enthusiastic researcher to be found the world over on the most forbidding for-

As he thought some of these things for the thousandth time, his sensitized ear caught the first rock under his mule's shoes. An hour afterward the trail became solid rock. He could tell now by the slant of his saddle and the mule's labored breathing that they were on a steep ascent. He reached out a hand and found the mule hugging a cliff. The trail must have been a narrow one. He could hear rocks dislodged by the mule's feet go clattering down into the barranca His panting mule's back grew suddenly horizontal, and he heard the guttural croak of Indians about him. At the same moment he smelled smoke and savored crisping tortillas. He heard the bray of a burro, welcoming his mule, the shrill voices of children, the sounds of a gathering crowd and other signs that he was in a native village.

"Ichicalli?" he asked.

"Ichicalli," several voices grunted.

ROD spoke in Spanish without getting an answer. Taking the shirt from his head, he pointed to his swollen eyes. From the immediate jabbering in their own tongue he knew they understood. He dismounted—and instantly regretted it, for some one took his mule away. Curious hands felt over his belt, his



boots, his thick blond hair. There was a tug at his holster, and he found his forty-five gone. An argument instantly started in the native tongue, probably over possession of the gun. As the fight waxed, sand began to strike him. He suspected it came from the hands of women and children. He held up his hands to protect his tender eyes.

He had begun to wish he had made an attempt at turning his mule around on the desert, when he heard a quick step behind him. It was soft, light and yet peculiarly imperious. A new voice began to lash the Indians. What it said, Rod had no knowledge, but he sensed a regal, impetuous quality quite distinct from the coarse indifference of the natives. The latter began to mutter sullenly among themselves. But the sand and fighting stopped. A moment later the new voice spoke in pure Spanish.

"Your eyes, señor—they are blinded!" she sympathized as only one of Latin

blood can.

Before he could reply, she had given authoritative orders in Ichiquerrec. He heard feet obeying her. They returned presently. He heard the sounds of liquids in ollas and smelled the incense of burning copal, which is taken from a sort of sumac. He heard her sprinkling the ground in a circle about him. Her voice gave a long priestlike intonation in the strange tongue. Up to this time he had only suspected her identity. Now he felt enthusiastically sure. He had but arrived, and already he had met the famous priestess of Ichicalli!

He tried to think out some plan to win her confidence. But when she pressed his eyes with soft bandages cool with some unknown liquid medicine, he forgot that. A delicious sense of relaxation stole over him with each intimate brush of her garments. They exhaled some delightful spicy perfume. He wondered if there might be any scientific truth in the claims that these *brujas* or priestesses could cast a spell on you. He thought he would let himself relax and see. Her

voice interrupted:

"The eyes—how do they feel now?"
"Better!" he declared, adding hopefully: "A little more treatment, and I believe I can see."

At once he felt the unseen form beside

him stiffen.

"I must go, señor," she said quickly. "No outsider, not even a mestizo, must see me. Your eyes need no further treatment except from the moon. You

are not the first who has been cured after the white sands."

"But don't go so soon!" Rod protested.
"I'm still blind as a bat. Won't you tell
me whom I'm indebted to?"

"You are indebted to my gods, señor, not to me," she said—and was gone. Rod could hear her at a little distance giving orders in the native tongue.

After a long interval an Indian approached and spoke in grudging Spanish.

"You are to rest two nights in Ichicalli. By that time your eyes will be well to travel."

"But I don't want to travel," Rod said blandly. "Not just then, at any rate. By the way, who was the efficient person who—er—treated me?"

"That is not for an outsider to know," the native informed him insolently.

"You can tell me at least," suggested Rod, "if she is young or old, and white or brown?"

The native, ignoring Rod's question,

said harshly:

"It is getting dark. I am to take you now to a place to sleep where the moon

can finish the healing."

Rod could almost feel the other leering at him in his blindness. He asked no more questions. The native guided him a long way, most of it uphill. Presently he stopped and threw something down. Reaching after it, Rod found his own roll of blankets on the bare open ground.

"What kind of hospitality is this to a blinded guest?" he asked heatedly.

But the Indian had silently gone. Rod stood for a minute, feeling rather indignant, helpless and alone. He could hear none of the ordinary sounds of the town from here. It came to him that they might have deliberately abandoned him. He decided he had better stay within reach of his blankets, or he might not be able to find them again. He noticed in the air here the same fragrance he had observed on the garments of the priestess. It was much stronger here. In perhaps an hour the pain in his eyes had subsided enough for him to fall asleep.

HE awoke suddenly, and found that he could see. The brilliant Mexican moon shone full in his face. He decided the strong light was what had wakened him. Then he heard the crack of a twig not far from his head. Lying perfectly quiet, he turned his eyes. He found a dark row of bushes extending almost to his head. In the shadow of those bushes something was creeping



up on him. It was already quite close. He could see a white blur such as would be made by the white cottons worn by the Mexican Indians. He glimpsed a hand moving near him. With a sudden spring he seized it, leaped to his feet and dragged the skulker out into the brilliant moonlight.

He was sure he had never been so surprised in his life. He was holding to the slender, struggling wrist of a girl not more than twenty, with skin whiter than his own, dark brilliant eyes, and glinting coppery hair flowing down her back in a loose mass. She was wrapped in a loose white shawl, but beneath it he saw the characteristic native feminine dress.

"Let me go!" she panted. It was the voice of the priestess who had bathed his eyes.

"I'm terribly sorry!" he apologized, and instantly released her.

"Be careful!" she warned sharply, as

he stepped back.

He turned his head, and found that he stood on the edge of the hill. A few feet beyond, the ground dropped away into an abrupt cliff. His eyes plunged down into a barranca whose black depths were clouded by shadows and billowing white mist.

"Perhaps now you will see that I am not here to hurt you!" she reproached him rapidly. "In the town tonight I heard the rumor that Ocotopec was boasting. He said he had left you on the brink of the barranca, and there would be no need for the town to feed you in the morning."

"I'm much obliged to you again!" Rod said slowly. "This time I don't believe the gods had much to do with it."

"You are white like me!" she exclaimed passionately. "I could not think of you young and blind, and dying like that! And now"—she wrapped her loose shawl close about her in a typically Spanish gesture—"perhaps you will forget, señor, that you have seen the white priestess of the Ichiquerrecs, because they believe it will bring very bad luck to the town if an outsider should see."

"I'll not say a word," he promised. "But please wait a minute! There's

something I want to tell you."

She stopped, at that. He drank in the vision of her white skin, her glowing dark eyes, her mass of hair almost reddish gold in the moonlight.

"Something you wish to tell me,

señor!" she reminded.

"To be scientifically truthful," he confessed, "I am trying to make my minute last as long as possible. But if you insist on my telling you—not in Guadalajara, famous for its pretty women, not even in the United States, have I seen anyone half so beautiful as you!"

Her dark eyes fastened softly on him. "You must not say that, señor. Only the things the gods make, like the moon and the stars and the flowers, are beautiful."

"You're a flower," he found himself saying. "And a star too."

"How am I a star?" she asked in a

low voice.

He took a step toward her. She shook her head and retreated.

"You must tell it from there, señor!" "When you first touched me," Rod told her truthfully, "it was like heaven. And now when I see you, something moves so deep inside of me that I can't describe it. As deep as this." He picked up a stone, stepped to the barranca and dropped it into the depths.

"You must be careful there at the edge, señor!" she begged. "It is very

far to the bottom."

"There are always ledges to catch on," Rod said carelessly. He leaned out over the brink to look down.

WITH a little cry the girl ran up, seized his hand and drew him back. "I cannot see you so close to the edge!" she breathed. "Something in me turns Slie started to withdraw her fingers, but Rod's hand had closed over them. When a few moments later he

relaxed his grip, her hand lay warm and pulsing in his.

"I must go!" she whispered. "It is

dangerous for me to be here."

"What's your name?"
"Yrenes," she breathed. "And yours?" He told her. Their faces were less than a foot apart. He felt the blood pounding amazingly in his veins. Like components in some sublime chemical law, he knew they were drawing closer. Her breath now was on his cheek. He was surprised to find that inches away, she was still lovelier than at a distance. Usually he had found with scientific observation that the opposite was true. Another moment, and he forgot science, archeology, anthropology or that he had ever been blind.

FOR incredibly sweet hours they sat together in the scented shadow of the tall evergreen bushes. She told Rod they were rhododendrons. From them she gathered the clovelike scent for her dress and hair. She pointed out to him the tree ferns on the opposite hillside and the endless white sands beyond, shimmering in a glittering sea of moonlight. He told of his life in Mexico and the United States. She told of the old priestess who had raised her, spoken Spanish with her and taught her about the Ichiquerrec gods. . . .

The dark hills of the Ichiquerrecs were the most beautiful spot in all Mexico when Rod woke next morning. Here was where he had first seen her and touched her. There was where they had sat together. Below him Ichicalli looked like a town in some Spanish fairy book the walls pure white from the gypsum sands, the red roofs glowing brilliantly in the sun, the square tower of the church abandoned by the padres now for forty years, and the dark shadows of the

fearful barranca close by.

Late in the morning a native appeared with a basket. In it were a small olla of chili, a plate of cold tortillas and some Mexican coffee. The Indian who brought it had a profile like a knife, and eyes of obsidian blackness. Before Rod heard his insolent Spanish, he knew instinctively it was Ocotopec.

"Sorry I'm still here," he greeted

cheerfully.

The Indian said very little. His fixed black eyes seemed to reply that the white intruder was not safe in Ichicalli yet. He stood motionless while his guest dipped up the chili with the tortillas.



Just as Rod finished the black native coffee, he felt a tremor in the hill beneath him. It was so slight he might have thought it his imagination if rocks hadn't rattled down the clifflike sides of the barranca. When he looked up, Ocotopec had curiously frozen. His obsidian eyes held something that Rod afterward tried to analyze. It wasn't exactly fright, but a sort of reptilian horror. Rapidly the native threw the dishes back into his basket and disappeared among the rhododendrons.

"Curious how that fellow looked at me," Rod reflected as he lighted a cigarette. "I might have been a scorpion or

a poisonous centipede."

But he didn't think of it long. His mind was too crowded with the golden warmth of the previous night. He asked himself—would she come tonight? He remembered now that neither of them had spoken about seeing each other again. At the time, held in each other's arms, it had seemed too perfect an understanding to mar with a practical question like that. But now he began to reproach himself for his neglect. What would he do if she should fail to come?

LATE that afternoon he felt another shock. This time a deep accompanying mutter came from under the hill. He timed it on the second-hand of his watch, then told himself he was terrifically hungry. They had brought him nothing since his first meal. He considered walking down to the town. Then he realized he would have no excuse for coming up

here again. For hours after sunset he lay listening to unusual sounds that reached him from the town. He told himself glumly they must be having some sort of *fiesta*. The *barranca* near by echoed to the roll of the drum and the deep throbbing note of the *huetlhuetl*.

The moon rose, and she had not yet come. When it finally reached midheaven, he told himself she was not coming. The *fiesta* had kept her away. Then he heard a sound in the shadow of the rhododendrons. He sprang up and saw her come out into the moonlight, incredibly lovely in this wild remote place.

"I'm ashamed for doubting you," he told her. "I should as soon doubted the moon or the law of gravitation."

"Sh! You must whisper tonight!" She laid her soft white fingers on his lips. "Ichicalli is not yet asleep. The town is frightened by the earthquakes. Perhaps you felt them here."

"They are nothing," he deprecated. "Once in Parral we couldn't get out of a house for an hour because the doors and

windows had jammed."

"Here they are not common," she said.
"The people are aroused. They think it happens because an outsider has come to Ichicalli. They talk very badly against you. Perhaps it would have been better if you had never come to Ichicalli."

"And you and I never met?" he asked.
"No," she whispered. "Not that. I would not give it up—not for life itself. But you are in danger, querido. Ocotopec and others spoke against you. I thought they even looked strangely at

me. Maybe you heard the music. That was to drive the earthquake devils away."

"It sure ought to drive 'em away," he

agreed with a grimace.

SHE gripped both hands tightly. "For your own sake, Rodrigo, I think

you should go tonight."

"Leave Ichicalli, you mean?" He stared at her. "It's as serious as that?" And when she had nodded gravely, "I'll go on one condition, Yrenes—that you go with me."

He saw her breath come a little faster. "Last night you said my gods were false—that the God of the white people was the true and great God. What good would I be to anyone, away from Ichicallia"

calli?"

"You would be my wife," he told her solemnly. "Yrenes querida, all my life I've dealt with dry dusty things. I never dreamed anything as beautiful and wonderful as you would ever come into my life. And now I'm not going to let anything take you away from me."

Still she hesitated.

"You don't love me enough to go?" he demanded.

That struck Latin fire.

"Love you?" she flamed. "You think I want to stay in Ichicalli! I will tell you something. Before Tejaizic died,—she was the old priestess,—she told me I am white Mexican, Spanish. She told me the Ichiquerrecs killed my mother and father in a hacienda somewhere east of here, and brought me to Tejaizic to raise." Her eyes flashed with scorn. "You think I want to stay here among the murderers of my mother and father?"

"Querida!" he begged and tried to

calm her in his arms.

"You think," she went on emotionally, "I would not like to return to my own white people? Since I know who I am, I have dreamed of the day somebody would take me away. But"—she caught his face passionately in her hands—"never, Rodrigo, mi vida, did I ever dream anyone would come I could love as I love you. You are more than all the rest of the world. That is why I am afraid to go with you tonight. If the Ichiquerrecs find me gone, they will hunt me. And if they find us running away together, they will—" She took a long breath. "I think they would—"

She stopped abruptly and seized his arm. He noticed she was staring over

his shoulder.

"A head!" she breathed. "We are being watched! I can see the head plainly. But in the moonlight I cannot tell who it is." She gave a sudden leap past him for a step or two. "It is gone!" she panted, returning. "They have seen us! They know we are together!" She grasped his wrists tightly for a moment. "Now I think I cannot say no, Rodrigo. I think we must quickly go, or we will be too late."

He followed closely as she led the way



through a succession of shadows around the hill. When she came to a gap of moonlight, she leaped across it like a rabbit. Suddenly he found her on the edge of a great black crack in the earth. It was a fork of the larger barranca. Across it swung a suspension bridge made from lianas, the creepers that infest so many of the Mexican trees.

Yrenes insisted on going first to show how it was done. The bridge twisted and bucked like a live thing trying to throw her off, but she ran lightly across. He in turn had to stop in the middle and hold to the lianas with both hands until he could go on. Another moment, and they were under the tree-ferns.

"We're all right now!" she panted, taking his hand and pulling him along



an unmistakable path. "This is the east trail. I know it goes to Yridono, although I've never been there. I'm sure there's water, and a forest to hide in if they come after us. On the white sands there would be nothing."

Soon they were dropping down into the barranca on a foot-trail that wound in and out among the bright cliffs in the moonlight. They had gone but a short distance when Yrenes stopped.

"Rodrigo!" she said piteously.

At the same moment he saw. A hundred yards below them a score of Indians in white cottons had been lying on the trail. Now they were stirring to their feet. Rod saw machetes glinting in the moonlight as the natives began to swarm up the trail where the fugitives stood.

"We're not giving up!" Rod told her. "We'll bluff it through. But you'll have

to do the talking."

Yrenes gave an answering squeeze to his hand. With him close behind her, she started down to meet the Indians. She hurled sharp sentences at them in Ichiquerrec. They snarled wolfishly at her until she ceased.

"I asked what they meant trying to stop us like this," she translated unsteadily. "They say they spied on us last night. Since I left the plaza tonight, both trails have been guarded."

"Tell them we are leaving for Mexico City," Rod spoke swiftly. "Tell them I have letters from the Mexican Government. If they don't let us through, the Government will punish them."

Again Yrenes lashed them. But tonight Rod saw there was no answering fear, no sullen muttering that would predict their final submission. yelled and snapped at her, motioning angrily with their machetes.

"Their talk is very bad, Rodrigo," she warned him. "They say they are not afraid of the Government at Mexico City. If it comes to Ichicalli, who will say that he has seen you? Perhaps you have died coming across the desert."

Rod set his young jaws.

"Ask them what they want."
"They say," Yrenes answered, "you and I by our love have broken my sacredness to the gods as a priestess. The gods have showed their anger at Ichicalli, so we must go back to Ichicalli to be punished. Then the gods will look with favor again on the town. Querido, I think we had better go. When all the people are together, I will speak. Perhaps I can soften them."

Reluctantly Rod let her lead him back the rocky trail. One of the natives trotted ahead. Before the others reached the tree-ferns, another brief tremor shook a multitude of small rocks and stones down into the trail. The agitated Ichiquerrecs hurried their captives on. One by one they crossed the liana bridge.

T seemed the entire population of I Ichicalli was waiting for them at the edge of the town. A cripple screamed hoarsely at Yrenes. Old women reviled her. Stolid-faced younger women stared pitilessly through the slitted eyes of the masklike faces. Each of the women carried a few sticks of dry wood. As the prisoners were taken into the plaza, great fires began to burn at the four corners of the square. It was like some barbaric bloody festival of the Conquest. The glaring red light flickered on the fanatical brown faces and on the strange deathlike whiteness of the gypsum walls in the moonlight.

Rod noticed Yrenes grow paler as she listened to the growing guttural muttering of the mob.

"What do they say?" he asked. "It is nothing, Rodrigo," she said unsteadily. "They want that you and I should step off the cliff together into the big barranca at sunrise. But I have not spoken to them yet."

"You must forgive me, Yrenes," he begged, "for getting you into this!"

"It is nothing to forgive, querido mio." She stroked his hand. "When I tell them about your God, they will soften. And if they are stony-hearted, then we will see your God show his greatness to the unbelieving Ichiquerrecs.

Rod felt the sting of blood to his face. He said nothing. She eyed him oddly.

"I did not misunderstand, Rodrigo, when you told me the gods I served were false—but the God of the white people

was great and true?"

"No," he said, "you did not misunder-stand." Her simple faith made him wince. How could he explain that the God he believed in was not a manlike being who revenged himself on his enemies, but an intangible something behind the cosmic curtain who did not interfere with individual right and wrong but was interested only in the ultimate destinies of nations and civilizations?

"I will tell them now about your God!" Yrenes announced. "And that bad luck will surely come to Ichicalli

if they harm you."

DEFORE he could decide whether he B should try to stop her, she had lifted her slim white arms to the mob for silence. The natives grew impassive. She talked but a few moments when scorn overspread the brown faces. Old women and some of the men interrupted with jeers. They gestured contemptuously toward the thick walls of the old deserted church on the plaza.

"It is no use, Yrenes," he said thickly. "They do not believe about your God, Rodrigo," she confessed. "They say this church is the house where your God is supposed to live. Forty years ago they cut the ropes from the bells to see if your God was strong enough to ring them. All these forty years the bells have been silent. They ask-if your God is great and powerful as I say, why doesn't He show them by ringing His

own bells?"

Rod looked at her.

"Yrenes, are you afraid to die?"
"You mean," she asked unsteadily, "that your God is not so great as you thought?"

"No," he said. "I don't mean that. My God is very great. So great He pays no attention to a small ant like me."

She sat quietly for a minute or two.

Then she squeezed his hand.

"It is you I grieve about, querido mio. Not me. I would not want to live without you, anyhow. And when we walk



over the cliff together, I know you will take me for the last time in your arms. Then I will know nothing of death when it comes."

They sat together hand in hand while the native mob about them grimly watched and waited.

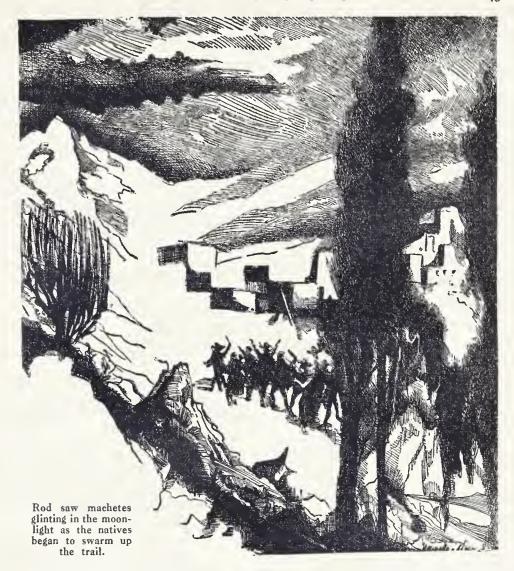
After a while fierce exultant cries began to rise from the crowd.

"Sunrise! It is starting to come," Yrenes explained emotionlessly.

Looking up, Rod saw beyond the shadowy church a narrow strip of eastern horizon. Along the edge of the sky faint streamers of luminous green had begun to rise. The Indians were stirring now, in fanatic anticipation.

"First," Yrenes said in the same unfeeling voice, "I want to say adios to an old man who once was kind to me."

As she got to her feet, Rod saw that she was reeling. He thought at first the events of the night had been too much for her. When he tried to leap up and catch her, he found his own footing unstable. For the fraction of a moment, he stood there swaying and confounded. Then, astonished, he saw the Indians staggering too. And now he realized that the sandy earth of the plaza was rolling in front of his eyes in long undulating waves like an earthy sea. He saw the white native houses and their red roofs rising and falling like packs on a moving mule. From deep in the barranca came a sullen subterranean roar. It rose to a hideous grating blare. At



that moment a strange, incredible sound was heard in Ichicalli.

"The bells!" Yrenes screamed. "Your

God is ringing the bells!"

With legs set far apart to ride the terrific shocks, Rod stared stupidly. He saw two or three white walls of the native houses on the plaza come tumbling down. But the thick masonry of the abandoned old church rode the rocking earth like a deserted ship on a rolling moonlit sea. The heavy tower cracked. But it kept monotonously rising and falling, while on their unoiled bearings the long-silent bells pealed out high above the bedlam like a wild alarm at the ending of the world.

When Rod looked again, the natives were prostrating themselves on the ground toward the battered old church. He felt no desire to smile. He knew that

nothing supernatural had happened—only the culminating and rather violent shock of a series of natural earthquakes. And yet even to Rodney Walcott, archeologist and anthropologist, there was something awe-inspiring in the scene.

When it was over, Yrenes kissed him with shining eyes. Then, turning, she addressed the frightened natives. She fairly radiated fire; the brown faces of the Ichiquerrecs winced under her words as from lashes. They brought up Rod's mule bridled and saddled. Gravely they waved good-by as Rod swung Yrenes into the saddle and started down the trail that led toward Maricoma.

Neither had any fear of the white sands. Scarfs tied over their eyes would shut out the sun and the wind. Besides, didn't he have a pagan priestess—and didn't she have her white lover's god?

Hey, Rube!

A very good story of the boxfighting business, by an Old Guard Blue Book writer.

By HAROLD C. BURR

HEY had to call out the cops to keep the crowds moving the day Rube Goldenrod landed in New York at the Penn Station. He was funny as he stood at the curb in his purple suit that would have made the original Joseph blink, with his crop of freckles, his large red wrists, and his wicker suitcase between his legs.

But he wasn't Rube Goldenrod then. He was Jerry Vosshausen. The Goldenrod didn't bloom until Oily Oscar Gal-

legher got his clutches on him.

A taxi bandit came creeping along the curb, and he took the Rube up to Harlem and showed him the East Side, when all the country boy wanted was to go to the New Arcadian Sports Palace just around the corner.

The boxing department was on the third floor of the New Arcadian, where the newspaper-boys sat around in stuffed chairs and smoked cigars on the house of an afternoon. Behind a glass-topped table sat an old young man, the wicked wisdom of all Broadway in his weak eyes behind their tortoiseshell glasses. Well, when Goldenrod, alias Vosshausen, showed up in the doorway, the room had a lot of fun with him.

"Want to see some one?" asked Tortoiseshell carelessly, not realizing what

he was picking up.

"I'm a fighter, Mister," declaimed the young man from Squash Corners through his nose, because he was very nervous. "I came to New York to box Jack Kid Berg if I can't do any better."

The newspaper faces were too well trained to grin. A stray manager or so in the shadows snickered. Over by the window stood a tall man looking down into

the street.

Tortoiseshell played up to the chairs. "I suppose you've been doing a lot of fighting at home, knocking 'em cold, and all that sort of thing?"



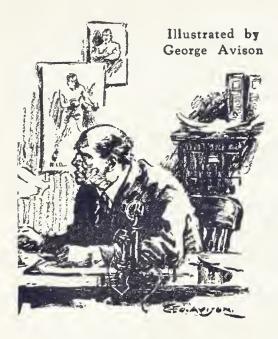
The Rube proudly displayed his medal. "Mister," he said earnestly, "I nearly killed a man I hit down at the railroad station one afternoon. He called me a darn' fool, and of course I wouldn't stand for that name. I knocked him over on the tracks with one punch. And if the four twenty-six hadn't of been late, he would have been killed, all right.

"After that, my friends sort of kept pestering me to go to New York and break into the fight racket. If I can't get Berg, one of the Perlick twins will do. I might fight 'em both in the same ring as a kind of novelty," he concluded

brightly.

"Any other fighters in your family?" Tortoiseshell prompted, looking around for Oily Oscar, who specialized in freaks.

"No, I'm the only rowdy, I guess," returned the Rube proudly. "Dad works in the shoe-factory at home; and my sister thinks it's vulgar to fight—like I want to do, I mean. Mother just threw her apron over her head and cried when I left home."



Tortoiseshell wasn't listening to the family history. He had located Oily Oscar over in a corner, talking rapidly out of the corner of his mouth to one of the callow younger reporters.

"Oh, Oily, want a piece of this champ?"

Oily Oscar Gallegher had begun life as a pickpocket and was still working at his trade. He never overlooked a ballyhoo. He cast his oil upon the waters, and after many days it was returned to him in considerably more than his share of the split. He was an old circus man, and knew all about build-ups. Now he came forward ingratiatingly.

"Come with me, young man," was all he said, cocking a soiled finger at the "Uncle Oscar has something for Rube.

you."

The Rube hoisted his wicker suitcase, and they departed together. The man at the window tossed away his cigar as if the taste of it was suddenly bitter in his mouth. Gallegher didn't say a word as they went down in the elevator, hurried along the street to his Seventh Avenue office. But if he didn't speak to his new protégé, he was kept busy answering greetings. He seemed to know everybody in New York.

His office had the look of a shyster about it, its walls hidden under placards of wrestling and boxing bouts, autographed pictures of sporting characters. There were odd-looking people standing around the anteroom too-old men with greedy shifty eyes, young men with straight looks and ears battered like Oily's platinum stenographer whispered a mysterious message to her

"Now, your name, young man," demanded Gallegher, closeted in his own little rathole at last.

"Jerry Vosshausen," said the Rube

simply.

Oily Oscar shuddered. "Jerry might do," he mumbled to himself, as one who turns vast problems over in his mind. "But that Voss business, now! Joe Humphries would get lockjaw trying to pronounce it."

"Who's Joe Humphries?"

Again that slight spasm. "The guy what gives you the publicity we can't get past those smart newspaper guys."

"I don't know about changing my name, Mister. I sort of want the folks back home to know I made good in New York. It's quite a good name at the There's been a Vosshausen Corners. there away back to the Revolution. My

great-great-grandfather---''

But Gallegher was just scratching his bare poll unheedingly. "Say, young man, ever see a circus clem in Squash Corners? You know, where the circus people grab tent-stakes, knot handkerchiefs around their arms, so they won't brain the wrong guys, and start cracking skulls?"

"Yes sir." "Well, what's the war-cry?"

"Hey, Rube!"

ERFECT," said Oily Oscar. "Well, young man, I'm going to have you fight for me—if you're any good at all, under the name of Rube—Rube—"

The manager's scheming expression became dreamy, his eyes slowly watering. Suddenly he slapped his pudgy thigh. "Rube Goldenrod! That's the name-Rube Goldenrod. I'll make it a big boxoffice attraction, just like Kid Chocolate. Every time you fight, Rube, I'll have the

house packed with pluggers.

"Don't start to muss the hair of the other bloke until they raise the cry of, 'Hey, Rube!'" continued the great artist. "I'll give out the story that you're a circus foundling. When you were only fif-teen years old, I discovered you on the lot beating up a bunch of roustabouts with tent-stakes, and you with nothing but your bare hands.'

"But that sounds dishonest, Mister!"

objected the bewildered Rube.

"Honesty in this game," quoth Oily Oscar, with a fleeting smile, "is always the last policy. Now let's see how you

look in fighting togs."

The first workout took place at Dooley's Gym, conveniently situated on the next block. The Rube would have liked to wear his own gloves, bought secondhand from the pawnbroker at Squash Corners, but there was no time to get his trunk.

The entrance to the gym was as dingy as Gallegher's office. The Rube was introduced in the casual manner of sport to the proprietor, a democratic individual who lived and slept in a pair of rumpled trousers, a sweater and sneakers.

"YOU know Rube Goldenrod, don't you, Dan?" Oily performed the honyou, Dan?" Oily performed the honors. "Well, you will soon. Dan,"-earnestly,—"you know I wouldn't lie to you. I know you twenty-five years, and have I ever lied to you? Now I'm telling you I got a champ, the best boy at his weight I ever handled. Green—yes. But a champ in the making. How about giving the kid a little trial gallop against Punchy?"

Dan, the skeptic, rubbed his hand roughly around Oily's egglike dome where the hair ought to have been, nodded to Goldenrod and pointed through a swinging door to a room where he could

dress.

When the big country boy had disappeared, his wicker suitcase banging awkwardly against his legs, Dan grinned at Oily Oscar.

"Another champeen, hey?" he hooted benignly. "I bet you haven't seen him

yet in tights."
"But Dan, I size 'em up from the way they walk."

"Looks as innocent as Mary's little

lamb, Ossie."

"Innocenter," confessed the other, grinning now himself. "I'll make another bet with you, Dan—that he leads with his right!"—the prize-ring's cardinal sin. "But I've a hunch he can be built up. If he turns out a flop, I should worry! All I've spent is my time."

"That's all you ever spend. Where

did you dig this one up?"

"Out of a haystack. S-s-h, here he

comes!"

Goldenrod's trial-horse had already been whisked miraculously into the ring, his head protected by a harness that resembled a football helmet. This was the Rube's initial disappointment. He wouldn't be able to knock out his man with all that leather around his face. Everything was very informal. There was no referee, and for a crowd they had the loafers who hung around the entrance downstairs all day, and came flocking into the rear chairs at the ru-

mor of a workout.

Below the ropes Gallegher smiled and nodded brightly to his new boy. The automaton in leather didn't say a word. Nobody addressed him. Rube Goldenrod saw part of a cruel, disfigured face, and gleaming, darting little gimlet eyes. He didn't know that Punchy couldn't speak above a whisper because of the batterings he had absorbed inside the ropes. But he could still hit like a tor-

The Rube squared away flashily, elbows working, feet dancing—saw a glove coming at him that grew bigger as it approached until it was all he could see. Then it hit him like a stick of dynamite, and he sat down grotesquely on the canvas, a look of astonishment on his features that sent the loafers into roars of laughter.

Oily began to count painfully, and Goldenrod jumped up in a panic and resumed a new fighting pose, this time

of ferociousness. . . .

Once his initial nervousness wore off, the Rube made a very good début of it. He had a trick of looking half frightened to death when his opponent rushed him—as Punchy was constantly doing; but it was just a variation of the old Leach Cross deception. The Rube got on his bicycle but to deceive. He could throw punches from all angles, going or coming. He was easily outpointing the automaton after the first five minutes of milling, and Oscar prudently thought it was time to call a halt.

"That's enough, Rube!" called Galle-"Go get your shower, gher suddenly.

young man."

OILY OSCAR was trembling when he turned to Dan Dooley "Have I got hold of something, or haven't I?" he gasped. "Green yet, of course—green as Central Park."

"In July," added the heartless gym-

"But he's got something better than class to start with—it's color, Dan," reverently. "He knows how to put on an act. I'm going to make him more than a champion. I'm going to make him one of the great moneymakers of the racket. He's a crowd-pleaser, just like Jack Dempsey."



Rube didn't fool around—he let the champion have it, flush on the button.

"Not Dempsey, Ossie," said Dan mildly. "Maybe King Levinsky, but not Dempsey."

"Go take a seidlitz powder for your-self!" invited the wrathy Gallegher.

Gallegher installed the Rube in a cheap theatrical hotel down a side-street, patronized by the tin-horns and ladies-inwaiting, asked Goldenrod how he was fixed financially, and when he heard the youngster had three hundred dollars, he quelled the instant itching in his palm and told him he would drop in on him tomorrow.

Up and down Broadway and through its side warrens went Oily Oscar Gallegher, spreading the glad tidings of Rube Goldenrod, just in from Squash Corners. He would fasten himself like a fungus to the lapel of the listener's coat, and rhapsodize about his new boy, greatest prospect in the world of padded gloves. Promoters and newspaper-men were the game he stalked for hours. The great

build-up had begun.

For what was left of the afternoon Rube Goldenrod, alias Jerry Vosshausen, saw the sights of a vast city by himself. He began to feel hungry and entered the White Front Restaurant; and there came to wait on him a brisk young damsel in a pert and starchy uniform. Throughout the restaurants of the United States the witticism is the social wedge between waitress and young male customer. When Rube's serving-maiden brought the coffee, Goldenrod said facetiously that it looked like rain, thus plagiarizing the oldest of vaudeville

jokes. But they both laughed like a couple of babes-in-the-wood.

He stole his first lover's look then. She just missed being undersized, with brown eyes and the roundest, smoothest, softest chin in the world. He accepted his check, laid down the biggest tip of his thrifty life, and stalked out of the restaurant—but not out of her life—forbiddingly. But he was back for breakfast. He gruffly demanded her name, and she said it was Sadie Wilberforce.

"Looks as if there might be some darn' good talkies over on that snaky street where they have all those lights lit nights," he finally blurted, red with embarrassment.

"There are," she said.

"Want to go after you finish?" he said boldly, freckles all illuminated.

"I do," she said, playing up.

RUBE showed up hours late for his appointment with his manager Oily Oscar. But that was because he had been telling Miss Wilberforce all about himself. He told her his right name, explained his mission in New York. She liked him immensely, for all his boasting. The other prize-fighters she had met drove up to the cafeteria in low rakish cars, with whole gangs of thugs trailing them, and got fresh over the midnight hash.

The Rube's first bout was a disappointment. He had looked forward confi-

dently to making his début at the New Arcadian Sports Palace, but instead Gallegher matched him with Spider Kelly at the considerably less aristocratic Brass Knuckles A. C. He didn't want Sadie to see him fight at that meeting-place

of the pork-and-beaners.

"Remember, young man," admonished Oily Oscar as he gently massaged his fighter's muscles while awaiting the opening bell, "don't start anything until you hear the mob calling, 'Hey, Rube!' I got half a dozen burglars with fire-engine voices at the ringside, scattered all over the main floor, up in the gallery. The crowd's sure to take it up. Crowds is like sheep."

SO Goldenrod obediently rode his bicycle for two rounds, and one minute and thirty seconds of the third, that scared look in his eyes. The Spider snarled at him to stand still, and the Brass Knuckle crowd, there to see action for their money, was all with the Spider. But the Rube refused to take the play away from Kelly. Then nearly midway through the third round, a man stood up in his aisle seat and exposed his tonsils.

"Hey, Rube!"

Others took up the old rallying cry. Oily Oscar Gallegher cupped his hands and yelled it up through the ropes. Not half the spectators knew what was up, but they joined the swelling chorus just the same. "Hey, Rube! Hey, Rube! Hey, Rube!" Then it stilled as quickly as if some one had spun a radio dial. Up in the ring Rube Goldenrod had become transformed, and the crowd forgot

all about yelling.

The Rube attacked the Spider with both fists—left, right, left, right. dumb-struck fighter stumbled backward on his heels under the fury of that unexpected assault. And he was back on his heels for the rest of the bout. But it didn't last long. He went down like a sack of grain, a dozen gloves winnowing home the blows. And like a sack of grain they dragged Spider Kelly to his corner for resuscitation. He didn't come to again for seven minutes.

The Rube received twenty dollars for that knockout. "Half for me and half for you," said Oily Oscar, like a philanthropist working at his trade. what the Rube didn't know was that his share of the split should have been one hundred and fifty dollars-sixty-five per cent for the fighter, and the rest for his manager. Nor did he know that Honest Joe Baxter, the boxing commissioner, had been trying to pin just this sort of thievery on Gallegher for years, in order to run him out of boxing.

Oily Oscar gypped the Rube in other ways of the highwayman. For instance, he told him the newspapers had to be fixed to get the right sort of publicity into the fight columns, and that it cost that kind of money to put over a champion, just as it cost money to put over a poli-

"I been lining up the papers," Oily had said unctuously that second day of their relations. "And she's costing you something. Before noon I'd laid out two hundred berries. But you won't mind that. You told me you had three hundred. Keep the rest for expenses. You'll need it in this town."

Gallegher might just as well have been speaking a foreign language to the Rube, for all he understood of it. He didn't want to appear too rawly rural, and after some slight objections, he counted out two hundred dollars into Oily's twitching palm, wetting each crumpled bill with his thumb to make sure no two were stuck together.

"I thought I was just going to fight my way to the top—and get paid for it,'

he mumbled in apology.

Gallegher gave him a glance of pity, and the Rube said he had heard of graft in boxing, but hadn't believed the yarns. The look of pity became more pro-nounced, and the Rube became so ashamed of himself he never mentioned it again. He supposed it must be the way things were done. He was learning about life from his manager-and Sadie Wilberforce.

He was easy to handle, easier to bilk. He had only one dissipation—hiding away in the dark burlesque houses of an afternoon by himself; but that was only when Sadie deviled him, as the nicest girls do when they see they have a man on their string.

ALLEGHER continued to fix up the ■ matchmakers of the little clubs and cheat Goldenrod systematically out of two-thirds of his split. Steamboat Jones, Ratlin the Killer, One-round Hennessey, Gussie Rothenberg, Cauliflower Calkins, Pete Murphy-the Rube met 'em all, and waited for the old circus cry. Sometimes he waited too long.

There were some rough work-horses in that mob of callous young men with

"I'd love to see you

fight, Rube," she

said, smothering

flattened noses and nothing much to look forward to except a future of paper dolls. They had seen fighters take to a bicycle before. In the Rube's second fight, he couldn't fool Steamboat, and Jones flattened him in six rounds. He outpointed Ratlin the Killer, which was quite a feat for a greenhorn. He knocked Hennessey kicking in one round, and lost a close decision to that clever little Jewish boxer Rothenberg.

"Gallegher tells me it's nothing to worry about, if I do have to take it oc-



casionally from these palookas," the Rube reported airily to the anxious Sadie, who didn't know about such things as developing a boy. "Oily's slick himself, and explains my mistakes. I never make the same mistake twice, he says, and that's why there's nothing to worry about."

It slowly dawned on Sadie and the public after some six months of varying fortunes, that Rube Goldenrod wasn't losing any more fights. All the decisions were going to his corner now, and often he knocked out his man. He was mentioned as possible lightweight championship timber, still green,-to use Gallegher's favorite definition,-but coming fast. Feature writers took him up; a syndicate offered him a fabulous sum to run his circus experiences. But Oily Oscar did all the talking—and all the collect-

All that had gone before was chickenfeed to Oily. He was merely fattening up his boy for the butchers. One day, then, he sought him in his hotel room, oilier than ever.

"Rube," he began unctuously, "I just now signed you up to meet a push-over. You can take this Jimmy Bloodgood at one bite. It's going to be the semi-final to the Carnera-Campolo fight at the New Arcadian a week from Wednesday. You ought to answer the gong a five-to-one favorite to cop. But I want you to go into the tank for me." Then hastily, at the look that came into the Rube's face: "For you too."

There was an ominous silence.

"You want me to lie down to Bloodgood, so you can clean up on the short end of the betting," said the Rube blunt-

ly, having been learning things.
"Don't I deserve a break?" whined Gallegher. "Haven't I been nursing you along swell? You're getting twenty dollars a night now, sometimes twenty-five. Where would you be if it wasn't for me? One little dive, young man. It will be all over in a minute. It's part of the rules. They all go into the tank up to their mouthpiece."

DUBE GOLDENROD didn't say any-K thing for a while. Oily Oscar wet his lips in the waiting. The manager was about to elaborate the reasons why he preferred his fighter to go crooked,

when he was startled by something he saw coursing down the Rube's cheeks.

"He's crying!" mouthed Gallegher, calling upon heaven to be his witness.

"The kid's crying!"

"No, I'm not, either!" half screamed the disillusioned young gentleman from Squash Corners, talking through his nose as he always did under stress of great excitement. "But it's a dirty, rotten game you're running, Gallegher, isn't it? Well, you aint going to drag me into it, Mister! I'll quit boxing first. I'll go home. I'll—I'll—"

Oily knew all the sophisticated arts of persuasion. He entered into a long dissertation on the relativity of honesty. He named the big fighters who had been mixed up in shady bouts. The Rube had never listened to so much scandal. It was like reading Walter Winchell over a period of years. But it made no impression, except that it sickened him. He grew suddenly very tired, wanted to be alone.

"Oh, get out!" he screamed, plugging his ears, restlessly pacing the room. "I'll chuck you downstairs in a minute, you mean little rat, if you don't go!"

OILY didn't linger to bring about the Rube's conversation to the byways of boxing. He wasn't the one to wage life's battles, either, with physical weap-Oily, having failed to quiet the waters, stole hastily away, closing the door of the room softly after him from impure habit. But once out on Broadway, he spread the news. Rube Goldenrod was all washed up-he would never fight again—he had crossed him with the ingratitude of a skunk.

Behind him he left a boy too fagged to get down his old wicker suitcase and pack it for the return-it would be a retreat, really-to Squash Corners. His sister would have something fresh to say, but his mother would be glad to see him. He didn't dare to think about Sadie Wilberforce yet. He supposed dully he would have to give her up too. She was

part of his New York life.

The knock sounded twice on the room door before he heard it. He thought it was Gallegher, back with more of his sordid arguments. But a stranger stood outside. The Rube hadn't seen the face of the man by the window of the New Arcadian Sports Palace that first after-

"Howdy, Rube," he said pleasantly. "I'm Harry Joplin, the fight manager. I heard just now that you've broken with Gallegher—he's broadcasting it around—and thought perhaps we might be able to do some business. Oily's going to try to have you boycotted at the clubs. But I could put a spoke in that little trick. I'd like to have you fight for me, Goldenrod."

"Thanks!"—wearily. "But I'm going

to quit the racket, Mr. Joplin."

Joplin didn't believe it. He didn't blame the Rube for being sore. Every boy who entered boxing with clean gloves and clean ambition grew sore when he heard about the Galleghers of the game. But he didn't make any more progress than Oily Oscar had made in the other direction. Jerry Vosshausen's mind was

Joplin was about to give up, when the

phone on the table rang.

"All right," said the Rube into the transmitter, "send it up."

Goldenrod didn't know the telegram was from home when he took it from the bellhop and tore it open. Three months ago, a telegram would have been an adventure in his life. But crackbrains frequently send wires to a fighter, wishing him luck in his next fight, asking him to appear at a stag, or challenging him. Yet this telegram left the Rube white and stricken.

FATHER BADLY HURT IN ACCIDENT AT SHOE-FACTORY STOP DOCTOR SAYS HE WILL BE INVALID FOR REST OF LIFE STOP PLEASE SEND SOME MONEY

MOTHER.

It wasn't Jerry Vosshausen who looked across at the waiting Joplin, but Rube

Goldenrod, the lightweight.

"I'll fight for you, Joplin-just one more fight," he said in a dull, dead voice. "But I need big money. Get me the lightweight champ—and the money that Gallegher stole from me."

IOPLIN set it down on paper before he left-those first fights at the Brass Knuckles A. C. and the probable sums they had netted Oily. Rube's new manager estimated he should have received fifteen hundred dollars alone for winning the decision over Ralph Ruggles. The total came to over four thousand dollars, besides the two hundred for the fake publicity in the beginning.

"I'll get it for you, Rube," promised Joplin, buttoning his coat, not asking any questions, but accepting what the gods, in the earthly form of a hotel bell-

hop, had laid at his feet. To pry \$4,-564.89 loose from the death-clutch of Oily Oscar would be akin to breaking into the Bank of England, but already he had a little scheme on the shuttle of his brain.

"And I'll get the champ, Mickey the Mouse, for you too," Joplin added reck-

lessly. "Give me three months."
"Can't wait that long," said the stubborn Rube. "The Mouse is all set to fight Taylor Shears for the title. But Shears broke his arm in training. Substitute me, in-three weeks."

"All right, three weeks, then."

THE Rube didn't have any yen for food, but he went over to the White Front Restaurant, a wounded animal seeking its mate. While his griddle-cakes became cold and soggy dough, he told Sadie the whole miserable story—hurt, angry, anxious. The girl's eyes grew a mite misty, and his coffee tasted a little salty when she returned with it. But any fool could have seen Miss Wilberforce was glad he had come to her in his mis-

ery.
"I'd love to see you fight Mickey the Mouse at the New Arcadian, Rube," she said, smothering her instinct to mother him before all the rest of the customers.

Harry Joplin turned out to be a magician. He arranged the bout with the lightweight champion for three weeks from that Friday, and when Goldenrod was seated in his dressing-room before he went upstairs, his legs dangling from a rubbing-table, Joplin entered and threw a bundle of crumpled bills in his lap, some silver rolling on the pine flooring. The money was so dirty the Rube knew it was from Gallegher direct.

"How-how did you do it, Mister?" gasped the Rube, scrambling on the floor. "Stomach-pump," retorted the laugh-

ing Joplin. "I'll spill the details to you afterward. Come on—it's time to give the Mouse his, Rube."

The Rube still wore in the ring that night the yellow silk dressing-gown with the goldenrod on the back that he had bought at Oily's suggestion. He mitted the crowd, danced in his corner, tested the ropes by stretching them—and spotted Sadie Wilberforce in the third row. He was too self-conscious to wave down to her, sitting there demurely, to watch her man triumph.

Squash Corners grinned across at South Brooklyn; but the champion was a lowering sort of creature, his thick black hair coming down in a point almost to the bridge of his long nose. His narrow face completed the mouse-like illusion. But there was nothing resembling the famous comic of the screen in the

sting of his left glove. . . .

The Rube fought his usual fight. Joplin didn't have any pluggers in the audience to raise the Rube's battle-cry, but it wasn't necessary: the crowd did it for him. It took the Rube four rounds to size up the pinched but vicious little champion. He ran around the ring, wearing his frightened expression. Then he heard the crowd chanting:

"Hey, Rube! Hey, Rube!

Hey, Rube!"

The champion must have heard it too, for he braced himself to meet the storm. But Goldenrod was in a hurry to wire that money home. And he wanted to ask Sadie if she would marry him, and hear Joplin's explanation. So he didn't fool around with Mickey the Mouse very long. At the first tribal cry he dismounted from his bicycle and let the champion have it—flush on the button.

The Rube took a sketchy shower, told crowding newspaper-men to call him up at his hotel after midnight, jumped into his clothes and went to meet Sadie Wilberforce and his manager by previous appointment at a Chinese restaurant that looked down on Broadway's milling night millions. He was panting a little when he arrived, because he had run all the way to the nearest telegraph-office.

"Well," Joplin was saying to Sadie, "I got the idea from Oily's own ballyhoo. If a crowd could shout, 'Hey, Rube!' in a voice of thunder, at his instigation, then it could ask Gallegher some embarrassing questions right out in public at my instigation: 'What about the twenty bucks you gave Rube for knocking Spider Kelly cold?' Oh, there were dozens of 'em. And Honest Joe Baxter was in the house, waiting to prick up his ears. I had my men all planted, drilled perfectly in what they should do. But Oily decided he didn't want to listen to that kind of a show, and came across."

BUT the girl wasn't listening to the last part of it. She had just spotted Rube Goldenrod, retiring lightweight champion of the world, coming toward them, and she stood up and called sweetly to him, the oldest look in the world in her eyes.

"Hey, Rube!" cried Sadie Wilber-



of Moscow

ANDREW WOOD

not light nowadays, or there would be roast meat."

There was a tense quietude in the big apartment below the old chandelier which had once lighted the magnificent uniforms of grand dukes and the gleaming shoulders of their ladies—and which a little later on, had shone on their spilled blood. The quiet was broken by a soft, dry laugh from the man. He took the long Caspian cigarette out of his mouth, and lightly touched the bare arm of the woman with its glowing end. She turned white but no sound left her

white, but no sound left her.

"Pardon, my dear Ellen," said Mischka Verin, swaying slightly, "—that was crude. But if only you would scream—fly at me! This American coolness of yours annoys the Slav in me. Understand, this is a highly dramatic moment. I inform you that I love another woman, that I am tired of you. And you are only curious—"

"—about that uniform you've put on,"

A thundering thriller of a novelette by the author of that Blue Book success "Red Terror," which in book form has recently won enthusiasm from the reviewers. The Frog, of course is our old friend of that story, the inimitable vagabond Sasha.



ended Ellen slowly, for him. "You're of the secret police, then! I ought to have guessed, because you're so suited to it so naturally underhanded and cowardly. Thanks for touching me with your cig-

arette-end only, Mischka."

"What will you do, Ellenovna?"—lazily. Even in drink, Ellen Moncrieff's husband was strikingly handsome, with a dark, blue-eyed face. The leather part of his uniform creaked; obviously he had donned it in bravado. The amateurs whom the secret police roped in usually kept their uniforms hidden, save upon highly official occasions. This one had the red wings of a flying-pilot on its high collar. Verin was a keen amateur of the League of Aërial and Chemical Defense.

"There's an ambassador, nowadays," said Ellen. "I've already obtained my

passport and visa."

Verin's mouth slanted, and he shook his head. Through the gust of cigarette-smoke, he loomed slightly bloodshot but smiling. How long he had been the smiling husk of a man, so far as she was concerned, Ellen Moncrieff scarcely knew. Before Maria Tanya, of the Proletarian Ballet, had come into his life—and long before that. But somehow she had hung

on, hating to admit defeat.

"It still remains Moscow," said Verin. His glance was fixed on her like that of some weak and drunken basilisk, Ellen thought. "The State still deals with its enemies. This is a show-down. There have been papers missing from my private bureau—plans of machinery. Some of them were found in the hands of a sabotage-gang which was—liquidated by the police last week. And letters. The handwriting of some of them was very much like your own, Ellen. Lamentably alike."

"Go on, Mischka!" The girl drew an inaudible, incredulous breath. "I have heard of frame-ups—but never as a domestic matter, before this. You mean I'm to be interrogated. By you?"

He looked at her sullenly, wickedly. He would have liked to keep up the mockery, the cold cruelty which the feel of the Ogpu uniform gave beneath its odd chill of terror and thrill. But it was beyond him to do so. With an oath he caught both her wrists.

"By Morjinsky, of Headquarters, who is waiting for my telephone-call. He deals summarily. By God, Tanva and

I have got you after all, Ellen!"

Ellen Moncrieff flitted to the door of the apartment. It was not panic. It was desire to get out of the presence of a madman. But the door was locked, and Mischka's laugh splashed a sound of ugly amusement....

Outside, Moscow, in its sheet of snow and frost-fog, was very quiet. The last of the loud-speakers had grumbled off to silence. The midnight anthem from the public clocks was muffled and inaudible. There came only a passing hum of sledge-runners on the ice of the frozen river behind the old Brodzky Palace, in which Mischka Verin of the Construction, and his foreign wife, had apartments.

Then silence again, the brooding silence of winter, hanging over Moscow and all the Russias, brooding over one

of the world's enigmas.

Sasha the Frog, up among the dust of the chandelier, rubbed his dimpled

chin. But he made no sound.

The husband was alone in the big apartment below. The Amerikanka wife, finding the door locked, had run into a small inner apartment and fastened herself in—without fear, but quickly, as one got away from an animal with a bad smell. She was brave, that one, with golden eyes and calm lips. She looked as though she could be friendly with a little bez prizorny of a Frog, without trying to put him into a clinic. And if Morjinsky of the police, who was called the Wolf's Shadow, came, she would be in trouble.

"It is written," murmured the Frog resignedly. "One must interfere. . . . The body can easily be disposed of on

a night like this."

He would have preferred red pepper. He was an artist with that condiment, that nostril-tickler. But it was not a

red-pepper occasion.

The telephone was on a small table in the corner. Mischka Verin poured out another drink, gulped it, and swaggered toward it. Peering down among the five-hundred dead gas-jets of the great chandelier, Sasha of the gutters and the sewers of Moscow followed the sleek top of Verin's head and the glint of a metal epaulette on his broad shoulders. Sasha's short legs got ready without noise.

He dropped accurately. The carpet, though old, was thick; it absorbed the thud of them both. The curly blade of the Karachaite comrade sank deep, twice, with a clean downward lunge, each

time in the same place; and Verin's cough was so soft that the Frog barely heard it himself.

"May I die as quickly!" whispered

Sasha soberly.

He was of the underworld of Moscow. a brat born in chaos and famine and a vagabond ever since, misshapen of limbs but in face beautiful as a cherub in a Botticelli fresco. An offscouring that the State tried at spasmodic intervals to catch-in vain. A child of weird and

terrible wisdom...

It was quick work to go through the pockets. One had to remember business. A nice wad of rubles and a bunch of keys, likewise a gold watch of very anti-Proletarian design—German. Evidently Comrade Verin of the Construc-tion, who could frame his wife out of sheer ignoble hatred, was not above taking a bribe. Having pocketed these, the Frog straightened himself. There was no other booty visible, and time was short. But on a cabinet stood a photograph of the American wife—Comrade Ellen. "It is purely bourjoi sentiment," Sasha told himself as he thrust it beneath the sheepskin coat he wore, "but I am soft as a chicken. And she looks a gentle and kind one. I will set it on my mantelpiece, some day."

He listened. Perhaps Comrade Ellen was trying to climb out of the window, though there was no escape that way he knew. But she was safe now. The Frog snapped out the light. When he pulled the curtain, the fog glinted like silver tissue behind the window. When he opened the double glass, the deadly cold from the iron-hard river froze his breath.

HE dragged the body to stepped out, and pulled it after him stepped out, and pulled it after him barling off a limp **IE** dragged the body to the window, —a ditch-born David hauling off a limp Goliath. . . . At some factory a hooter droned wearily for the night-shift, and in the rabbit-warren of the Brodzky Palace a baby cried for nourishment. But the rimy ice was under the Frog's boots, the white vapor blanketed him and his burden.

Where the warm water from the new leather-factory cut a pool of black liquid in the ice, and a bleared lamp or two glimmered on it, Sasha the Frog slipped from under the weight he carried. He thrust hard at it, making it slide. Almost at once it vanished under the ice.

He crammed his fists into his eyes like a child, like a tired old man, and controlled his whistling breath. Hesitantly he looked back where the vapor hid the Brodzky Palace, shook his head, and went *clop-clop* into the darkness.

IN the lounge of the Hotel Moscowa, I the big new caravanserai for foreign tourists, in which were baths and silken eiderdowns, and food such as was yet found nowhere else in Russia, Bruce Dayton drank tea on a plush settee. In appearance he was a sleek, well-groomed business man. He was dressed in emphatically American clothes. His papers described him as one Herman White, representative of Grayson Cotton Driving Ropes, Inc., Fall River, Mass., visiting U.S.S.R. on business. That he had ever been smuggled out of Russia into Poland with a bullet close to his spine, or that his name was neatly set down for a pistol in the neck in the back pages of the old Tcheka police, nobody would have suspected—luckily.

"It's good to meet up with you again,

Johnny-Ivan," Dayton said.

His companion smiled. It transfigured his rather dreamy, rather stern young

"Tell me. I think no one listens. What madness is it, this time?"

Bruce Dayton put down his tea-cup and lighted a cigar. Then he said quietly:

"Watch the staircase for a man with a scar on his cheek. He'll come down presently. His name is Racker; he's a German, and he's my meat."

"I am relieved. I thought that this time it might be the dictator himself. But—seriously, please. Still no one listens, I think."

Dayton took the cigar from his mouth: a business man clinching the argument

to any observer.

"Karl Racker. Berlin, New York, Vladivostok—anywhere. Espionage, of course, but a free-lance. There are a pile of free-lance agents nowadays, taking their pickings everywhere, out in the capitalist world yonder, Johnny-Ivan. Working for private munition firms, mostly. In the next European war many a man will get a packet of poison-stuff from an enemy plane that he helped make in the factory in his own home town-and serve him damn' well right, I think."

Dayton paused.

"Mustn't let it run away with me. Listen: there was a man out in Ohio finding a cure for cancer. A radiologist. He found something—what might be described as a kind of synthetic radium. He worked out formula after formula, but it stayed at one place. It stayed at a sort of tear-gas that not only brought tears to the eyes, but ate them away, destroyed the sight and reached the brain in twenty-four hours, making raving madmen. This was a gentle old professor and he was trying to cure cancer-was halfway to finding a cure for it. . . . But Racker stole his formula. The old professor's a lunatic now. Racker tried it out on him."

"The civilized world!" murmured Ivan Kirilov satirically. "We in Moscow are

barbarians, no doubt-"

"Racker has come to Moscow to hawk the formula. He had an invitation from the Gay-pay-oo. I'm after him. old professor hired me for the search, while the stuff was eating his eyes out. I was his nephew, you see, Johnny-Ivan."

KIRILOV had grown paler. His eyes were cloudy. Body and soul, he was a good citizen and a Bolshevist. But he was of the New Idealism, which was sick of blood and terrorism and the secret powers of the police. Such men were growing more numerous in the new Russia.

"You trust me, my Bruce, as of old. I am grateful. I might have turned Gay-pay-oo, for all you know. May I

hunt with you?"

Their hands met. The argument was clinched. And—then it was that down the staircase came Karl Racker, moving like a large and genial beast in his heavy furs, the white scar gleaming on his cheek-bones, his big nostrils dilated, his eyes brutally and arrogantly alight, his lips red and moist.

"Cocaine!" said Ivan Kirilov, under

his breath.

"Thank God. Yes, he's a dope-boy. They always let up sooner or later. This is the nearest I've ever got to him."

Dayton's low voice vibrated. He felt the lump of his automatic in the pocket of his fur coat as he swung it up. The two went out in the gelid breath of Moscow, sauntering yet watchful of the figure ahead. It was only evening, but there were few people astir. In two days came Revolution Day, and those who were not in the factories were gathering warmth against ten hours of jubilation in Red Square, with the thermometer at twenty below zero. Lenin's tomb glowed like a ruby, with only the muffled sentries about it. A soft quietness lay over everything, hypnotic, vaguely menacing,

as snow in Moscow always had been to Bruce Dayton's imagination. The red of blood and the white of snow!

"It is different, my Bruce," said Ivan quietly, seeming to read his thoughts. "We are coming out. Where we shall emerge, God only knows. But we shall

emerge."

"If they were all like you, Comrade Johnny-Ivan! To help a man out of the country when those Black Crow prisonvans were as thick as dogs after him. I'll say you were a comrade! Five short years ago! Where is Ellen now?"

His pulse pounded, then stalled. He ought not to have asked that question, he knew. But it had burned on his tongue since Johnny-Ivan had prowled, looking for Herman White of Grayson Cotton Driving Ropes, into the Hotel Moscowa. How clearly he remembered Ellen Moncrieff in her Red Cross uniform, fired and intoxicated by ideals! After the stupid brutes of the Tcheka turned their fangs on him because he had helped to free a cartload of doomed bourgeois, he had never seen her again.

"She married Mischka Verin," said Ivan, and was silent for a moment; then grimly: "Those Black Crows are no more. But the Gay-pay-oo took over the books of the old Tcheka. And they are infinitely more secret and subtle than the Tcheka was. . . . The curse of Russia, as the secret police always have

been."

"Okay. I'm not staying around here long, Johnny-Ivan."

RACKER was swinging ahead under-neath the arc-lamps that sprayed the high snow-drifted walls of the Kremlin. Past the Iberian Gate, with its Red Guards, a droshky white with frost came tinkling its bells. Dayton hailed it. There was a little white spot on each of his cheekbones. He said in low tones: "You should have seen that calm old man, with torment and madness before him, when he made me promise to come after Karl, Johnny-Ivan!"

The droshky passed the big, buoyant figure, and stopped by the end of the Kremlin wall at a word from Dayton. Its two passengers strolled back and let

it pass on.
"God, how quiet it is! I hate Moscow

when it's quiet. Brooding."

"Steady, my Bruce. Moscow always broods—but watchfully. If there is to be a killing, let it be something silent, for heaven's sake. True, the Germans



A chill feeling came over Dayton as he stared at the monstrous visage of the War God. "Perhaps it is the ver-dict of the future on us," said Ivan Kirilov somberly.

formula, Herr Racker! Either that or your life. I'm indifferent as to which.

Hurry, man!"

"So!" breathed Racker, staring down beneath his eyelids at the blue point of Dayton's automatic.

SHEER blind terror seemed to streak through him. Right into the barrel of Dayton's weapon he staggered, broke free and ran headlong. There was something grotesque about it. An ironnerved secret agent, a drummer in new forms of death and maiming, was shooting wildly from his pursuers through the darker parts of the Red Square in Moscow, head down, heavy body moving

like some swift bear.

Kirilov's hissed warning came: "Don't fire!" They were both lighter, younger than that massive, ungainly figure. plunged out of the pale radiance of the square into a dark street, obviously trying to shake them off. It kicked over a lonely beggar's brazier of charcoal, and went on with a half-starved dog snarling at its legs. Here it was darker. There had been rebuilding. From one of the concrete tenements, new and sweating, a woman's voice shrilled derisive encouragement of the chase. . . . Then, a dark and yawning vacant lot of ground, lit only by the pale snow, and the flushed sky from the distant boulevards.

"Devil take your rebuilding, Johnny-Ivan!" said Bruce Dayton bitterly.

Ivan pushed open two large gates. What was revealed made Bruce Dayton remember with a jar that he was in Moscow, where Asiatic fantasy rubbed shoulders with grimy Western toil; and Propaganda, after Lenin, was the god. There was a tall hangar, dimly lighted; and in it stood a gigantic figure made of pasteboard or some such flimsy stuff. It towered like some enormous carnival shape on its wheeled platform—a bloody effigy of imperialist War, with lust in its saucer-eyes, and death in the painted red foam that slobbered about the grinning mouth and huge chin. Thirty feet to the roof of the hangar it reared, and the ladders and plankings of the painters were still about the monstrous visage. A chill feeling came over Dayton as he stared.

"Crazy-but great."

"Perhaps the verdict of the future on us," said Ivan Kirilov somberly. "It is parked here ready for the demonstration on Saturday, when it will be filled with little Octobrist boy and girl brigadiers, who will poke their heads out of that big ugly mouth, as it is dragged through the crowds. We're realists, my Bruce.... Your German has vanished."

Something drew Dayton closer to the effigy. With his hand on the butt of his weapon, he prowled round the cleaned and swept platform upon which it rode. Then suddenly his companion pointed silently to a small door which gave access to the interior of the pasteboard giant. A faint creak sounded, then silence.

"Careful!" whispered Kirilov, but Dayton had wrenched open the door and plunged into the darkness.

"Racker!"

It was infernally dark, and in the very first moment, Bruce Dayton knew his own foolishness. The only excuse was that his hands hungered for the human tiger who hid in that pasteboard belly of War. Something kicked at his wrist and sent his weapon flying; like a falling sack something dropped on him. He went down with a knee boring in the small of his back and his teeth in his lip. On his neck a sandbag fell, and jolted him into sick weakness. He could hear Johnny-Ivan milling with somebody, and that added guilt to his nausea—he had not thought of the risks Johnny-Ivan took.

Then there were voices, Russian voices:

"Let us have a light."

UNDER the light of one bright electric bulb that sprang in the chamber, three men ringed Johnny-Ivan and himself, where they sagged, pinioned by leather thongs which had been all too skillfully ready for them. They breathed hard, but were quite composed. Most composed of the three of them was Karl Racker, who was tapping a cigarette on a gloved hand.

"I am not going to mock, my dear Mr. Dayton," he said. "I have been trapped myself before now. But never so completely, or in such a unique place. Meet Captain Stepan and Lieutenant Fedin—

of the secret police, naturally."

The two officers sent a look of cold curiosity at Dayton and Kirilov. The eldest, high-cheek-boned and furrowed like a bloodhound, smiled satirically at Ivan Kirilov, and then shrugged to the German.

"I have a warrant to deal summarily," he said; "and all the requisite papers about the American and his old crime. This Kirilov has been suspected by the Department for long. He seems to be

hostile to the very existence of the Guardians of the State. But, of course, that is internal politics which do not interest you, Herr Racker. Fedin and I are cramped a little with waiting here. Shall we waste no more time?"

For answer Racker gave the Ogpu officer a look of harsh arrogance. He was the indestructible Prussian of Germany, riding on top, jack-booting over subordinates. The drug that whipped him to brilliance burned visibly in his eyes.

He addressed the American.

"I have the formula of Actinium X, Mr. Dayton, as you conjecture. My prospective customers are the secret police of this country. As you know, they act independently of their government. Indeed, they're becoming a little nervous -hence, perhaps, their wish for an option of Actinium X. But they're skeptical of my claims. Naturally, I couldn't bring your uncle to Russia as an exhibit. But I will demonstrate-artistically, amusingly!"

"How, you doped coyote?" Dayton demanded, bunching his muscles use-

lessly under his bonds.

"I have no objection at all to telling you, Mr. Herman-White-who-will-neverbe-missed. I have made two small lowconcussion bombs of your uncle's excellent cancer-cure. Popped into the mouth above,"-and Racker jerked his thumb to the tunnel-like interior overhead-"the fall would give them the requisite concussion. Then these officers, who have been lent to me, will collect you, as—shall we say as a specimen? You will see directly. Schnell, Captain Stepan! Move, if you please!"

T was as cold as anything, for little Sasha the Frog, curled up under the heavy wheels of the War God, in spite of the tin of hot charcoal he had snaffled from some street-repair gang, and a hunk of sausage he munched. For several nights running, he had slept cozily inside the War God, and it was just too bad that some other birds of darkness were there before him tonight. He did not put his nose inside to see who they Little Sasha knew better than that. The clinics and state homes were always setting traps for him. Instead, he kept wary and watchful.

When the door opened, he scuttled belly to the floor of the hangar, into the shadows to get a better view: Two Greenbottles and another, a foreigner. Every nerve in him pricked up. The foreigner looked rich and prosperous, The imp of mischief began to ferment in Sasha. Under the very noses of two Greenbottles-

"The ladder!" said Racker. "I will go up. Stay down here, Captain Stepan,

and listen!"

He was on the first rung, when Sasha greased silently like a little viper along the floor and plucked him by the boots so that he came down with a shout of fright. Sasha crammed his knee into the thick red throat, and his hands fluttered at lightning speed about the struggling, cursing figure in the moment before the pocket-lamps of the Greenbottles sprayed upon him.

THEN Sasha stayed not upon the order of his going, but went. Something snored unpleasantly past his cheek to the dull "pflut!" of a silenced pistol.

But he shot out of the yard unhurt, with the foreigner roaring after him, and the Greenbottles not far behind. Across the vacant lot of land streaked Sasha, well aware that his little legs were not good in a straight chase. Luck showed him favor. A red-painted watchman's hut, by a deep trench in the frozen ground-and empty. Sasha dropped into the trench, and found it part of a complete labyrinth. The flash-lamps of the Greenbottles were dancing overhead. They had missed him for the time being.

"What a pother about nothing!" muttered Sasha disgustedly, examining the little booty he had been able to snatch. It consisted of a silver snuff-box containing stuff like dry snow-cocaine, he knew; some German valuta; a large fountain-pen; and two odd objects like small onions, made of thin dull metal. Sasha squinted solemnly at these latter, and considered throwing them away.

It was just then that the heads of the two Greenbottles looked round the corner of the trench. Sasha jerked one of the onions at them, but it missed, and only hit the side of the trench with a dull sound. There was an astounding scream, though, and both men clapped their hands to their faces and staggered back, while out of the trench, silhouetted against the glowing sky, leaped the foreigner, as though the devil himself had red-hot claws at him. Sasha had not seen slicker movement since his last visit to the Moscow ballet.

Nor did he himself stay. He had done something nasty to the two Greenbottles, for they were squirming. Acid—



vitriol, perhaps. Sasha whistled noiselessly through his white teeth, more in curiosity than concern, as he plunged along the trench. He pocketed the other onion carefully, for he had a weakness for grenade weapons of any sort. And this was effective stuff, evidently.

When he cautiously climbed out of the trench, it was to find himself again almost opposite the yard that held the hangar of the War God. His guttersnipe nose was all prickling with inquisitiveness. What had those three been doing there? The Greenbottles were blinded, and the foreigner as frightened as a burned cat. Even if they came back, he had the other onion... Noiselessly the Frog crept onto the platform and tried the door in the great painted flanks. It was locked, so there could be nobody inside. He began to pick it skillfully. . . .

Some fifteen minutes later two men walked among the crowds which jostled in the yellow slush of the boulevards. They crossed through the traffic of crashing tramcars, and under the lights of the arc-lamps and the flickering firesigns, as leisurely as Muscovites born. Ahead of them slouched a small nondescript figure with the red rosette of a young Octobrist in his cap.

"Sick? Hold up, my Bruce. And speak in Russian—but low."

speak in Russian—but low."
"Pretty sick. This is like a walk to an execution—but you can't guess what moment the drop will fall. I've pulled you into a fine mess, Johnny-Ivan! Is that young tough real, and is he to be trusted?"

"Who knows? He got us out of the War God, where we were booked. We've come nearly a mile without the police descending; and their wires will be humming all over Moscow this minute, unless he destroyed those two GPU men and Racker too, which isn't likely. This is Russia. Consider the viewpoint of the state police. An agent comes to sell a valuable weapon—and all governments are collectors of valuable weapons in these strange days, eh? A man whose name is already written in old ink in their books comes to steal the weapon, or to kill the agent-that is you. A Soviet citizen who has plotted to clip the wings of the police and is therefore likewise in their bad books joins himcheerfully, my Bruce, and thankfully, because I am a real patriot, and there is no greater country in the world than Russia will be when it comes out of such old shadows as the secret police. 'Well then, comrades of the Ogpu, you know your duty?" Ivan Kirilov laughed. "I grow garrulous, which is another Russian vice. Silence, my dear friend, and follow the imp who has so far delivered us."

By this time Sasha had lounged out of the boulevard and was crossing one of the big white bridges. He leaned over the parapet, spat thoughtfully onto the ice below and turned to hold out his hand for alms, with an impudent grin.

"Do you sweat? We are nearly there. The Amerikanka lives in the Brodzky Palace—Number 382. She too thinks no great shakes of the Greenbottles, and I imagine would help a fellow-countryman who had got into their hot water. But perhaps I had better come."

A MILITIA officer, revolver-holster polished, came swinging under the bright globes of the bridge-lamps. Quick as lightning, Sasha whipped out a photograph from his breast-pocket and offered it for sale, as the man, with a sidelong look down his nose, passed.

"One makes a few kopecks this way. Sometimes they are decent and sometimes not. They are supposed to be propaganda photographs. But as a matter of fact, this is of the *Amerikanka*

woman Ellenovna. It came into my possession by accident. She is a widow, I think."

There was a hint of swagger in the gait of the Frog as he went forward again. Dayton felt his lips dry and harsh. He caught his companion fiercely, like a sleepwalker on the brink of awaking.

"Johnny-Ivan, that portrait was--" "I know. One walks in the dark. A widow, that offspring of a fairy said. She wasn't that a week ago."

"We can't! Don't you see how we should incriminate her?"

Ivan Kirilov took off his hat and brushed the fair hair across his wet forehead. He too hesitated, and looked back over his shoulder to the riot of radiance and snow-slush and black sky that was Moscow. A big workman moved past, singing softly, with dreams in his fine gaunt young face; and in a doorway an old crone, bent with years of striving to hide the unmistakable features of the aristocrat, cringed to keep the wind out of her rags. To Ivan Kirilov, the contrast was good, fiercely good. Soon the old aristocrat would die and be at peace, and the new Russia would

> "That squadron will come searching; so we must let them know the fate that has overtaken us-we will light the bonfire." A few minutes later the plane was but a red gout of flame.

the invisible trap, he must try to save whatever else perished.

In the great carved gateway of the Brodzky Palace, floodlit in red, and with a portrait of Lenin over its chipped stone and rusty ironwork, Sasha politely gave way to a citizen who was moving to other quarters with the aid of a perambulator and a small handcart. Then he vanished inside.

When the door of Apartment 382 opened to Ivan's knock, Bruce Dayton became conscious that the sense of the inevitable happening, which he had al-



ways experienced in Russia, was upon him. It was Ellen, slimmer, quieter, paler than before. But Ellen. She looked at them both with eyes that widened slowly. But it was at Bruce Dayton she looked longest and most unbelievingly, with a slow color enriching her cheeks.

"Come inside." The door closed. "This isn't possible, of course, Bruce. Yet it

seems to be you."

"It's I, Ellen. I'll tell you later how it happens. Tell me, first. Your—your husband—Verin—he died, didn't he?"

ELLEN sat down lightly on the edge of the table. She had always been marvelously brave and quick on the uptake when things happened. Dayton saw hollows under her eyes now, but she spoke

simply:

"If he did, this is the first I've heard of it. But he might have. I guess you to know everything quickly, Bruce? Last evening he was going to telephone to the GPU—he was one of them—when he vanished. He meant to hand me over to them. It was all faked, of course, but he wanted to get rid of Well, he vanished. I found some blood on the carpet; that was all. And not much of that. . . . I'd meant to leave Moscow by the night express. But when I reached the station, the GPU men there said my visa had been canceled for a day or two. They were very polite and apologetic, but they sent me back here. And here—I've stayed."

A momentary trip came into Ellen's breath; that was all. Dayton held her fingers for a moment, and then she was spreading food and drink before Ivan and himself. And before they knew it, Dayton and Ellen were looking as though they drank each other in. Watching them, Ivan Kirilov forgot for a moment that love was only the bourjoi name for a simple biological business between a

man and a woman.

"It's marvelous," said Dayton slowly.
"But we must go. You're sheltering state enemies, Ellen. It's dangerous."
"Yes," said Ellen. "If Mischka comes

"Yes," said Ellen. "If Mischka comes back, he'll deliver you up with gusto, as well as me. And if he doesn't—well, I'm certainly watched. I might find you some sort of disguise before you went."

Dayton drew a sharp breath. She was thinking of Ivan and himself only. A red lust to kill Racker before his own time came turned him cold. He paced to the window and looked through the slit of the thick curtains with a subtle

feeling of imprisonment and doom for the three of them—Ellen, Ivan, himself. In the kaleidoscope of distant traffic there seemed more swiftly moving headlights than was quite natural. Half a dozen leisurely horsemen jogged over the white bridge they had just crossed. Somewhere, on some radio-set, Morse was ticking.

There sounded a dull thud on the carpet, and both he and Ivan wheeled

with their automatics out.

"Okay, comrades—put up the gats," said Sasha the Frog in good gangster American, with a shy obeisance to Ellen. "Has everything been explained? I am sorry to say that the neighboring streets are as lousy as Ivan's shirt, with spies and such people. We are tracked to the neighborhood, but not, I think, to the Brodzky Palace. In case they make a house-to-house search, I suggest the chandelier."

Ellen looked at Sasha's beautiful face and quaint figure—but this was Moscowunder-the-surface. She shuddered slightly for some unknown reason, looked up

and breathed:

"Of course! It's huge. And strong. I can deal with whoever comes, Bruce—

Ivan. Trust me."

"I have a private way; but it is from outside, and by way of an aperture which will take only my small body," apologized Sasha. "So if there is a ladder—"

It was dark, up there on the vast chandelier against the high smoky ceiling. The center plate of hammered brass, green with verdigris, made a shallow bowl the size of a small concert platform; the fluted pillar was as thick as a tree-trunk. Bruce Dayton looked at Sasha the Frog, and then at Johnny-Ivan. "Still Russia!" he said.

"Still Russia," said Ivan Kirilov.

"A lot of Americans take refuge here from the evils of the capitalist system," said Sasha modestly, "and from the racketeerstroi and the gangstermenace. I have met several, and love them. They will help to make Russia a great and free country—some day. At the moment our police are the chief obstacle—as, I am told, they are sometimes yours."

IT was after midnight that there was the sound of a stopping automobile in the street below, and within a minute, a knock at the door. Ellen came leisurely from the inner room, suitably disheveled and alarmed, to answer. They

were not Ogpu greatcoats who stood there, but a man and a woman. The woman smiled, brilliantly but carelessly, as she entered.

"We have important business with Mischka, if you please, comrade," she

said.

She was white as magnolias, with light eyes, a scarlet gash of a mouth, and flaxen hair—a crudely animal creature veneered over with blonde beauty.

"Mischka is not here, Tanya. He left

yesterday."

Tanya stared. Very coolly she opened the door of the inner room and searched, while her companion tapped his foot impatiently. He was big and poker-backed. Muffled against the cold as he was, almost the only thing of his face that Ellen could see was a livid white scar.

"Where is Mischka? Answer!"

"I don't know."

THE scarlet mouth tightened viciously, with dawning fright behind it.

"This is no time for old-fashioned jealousy. I don't want Mischka for love this time, but for business. It is important. He has been chosen for a mission—"

"Donner!" growled her companion. "Woman nonsense is all very well in its place, but we are in a hurry. Where is

your husband, jealous one?"

His great hands crushed Ellen's, and forced back her arms agonizingly; the cold and brutal face grimaced into hers. Tanya laughed shrilly, to see the struggle. Numb with pain, Ellen broke free -to recoil out of the wind of a dropping body that slumped down upon the man's broad shoulders. There was the crack of an automatic-butt against bone. Ellen Moncrieff saw, as through a mist, Bruce Dayton's arm upraised in a rain of killing blows on a cropped head that lay on the carpet—and involuntarily caught it, to keep it back from murder. Tanya had fallen into a chair, and was looking at the point of Ivan Kirilov's knife, which was very close to her throat.

It had all happened in a few fleeting seconds of rather dreadful silence; and then Ivan spoke briefly: "The woman, Sasha!" he said; and the imp called Sasha calmly took out from his voluminous pockets a large handkerchief and a

length of thin cord.

Bruce Dayton looked up from where he knelt, laughing on a whistling breath. "It's Racker, right enough. Sometimes the gods are good," he said—and stayed there with his revolver still butted, like one ready to complete a task. It was Ivan Kirilov who shoved him gently aside and began to search the big prostrate body. Presently he took forth a small sealed envelope and shelled it open with his thumb. The ink of the black Russian characters was obviously fresh. And it was addressed to Mischka Verin.

It is required that you and Comrade Tanya Tanushov take the German Karl Racker to Villinev, in the Ukraine. You will proceed to the flying-field of the League of Aërial and Chemical Defense, and leave at daylight in the machine that awaits. At Villinev, you will introduce the German Racker to the Governor of the Kremlin there.

"Villinev!" murmured Johnny-Ivan. He seemed to change, slowly. His fine and sensitive mouth tightened hard for an instant. He looked through a gap in the window-curtains at the big car which had brought Racker and Tanya, and now stood empty in the quiet street below.

"I think we are all pretty desperate, comrades," he said, "and in rather perilous straits. I apologize on behalf of my country. It is unfinished, yet. Bruce, my friend, you cannot kill that man in cold blood, so just put up your weapon. -Ellen, could you wear that woman's clothes, and-I am not mad, I assure you-even contrive to look a little like her in other ways? This is a game of charades. I am your husband; you are Tanya; and Bruce is this German. With considerable luck, we might make the air without raising suspicion, since we have the credentials. We shall certainly head for Villinev. And just a little beyond—into Roumania. . . . The devil, Bruce, I seem to do nothing but get you out of this country!"

AS the sad whimsicality of Kirilov's smile flickered across to Bruce Dayton, he understood. A sense of complete failure came upon him. He had been in Russia barely twenty-four hours, and the secret police were hot on his track. He was there on a private mission, under false name and forged papers, beyond the help of ambassadors. And Ellen—

"Your husband, Ellen. Is he likely to

come back?"

"I don't know, Bruce. I've finished with him—long ago. I'm coming with you."

A cough sounded behind them. It was Sasha the Frog, cherubic, earnest.



The plane swooped and hummed steadily on its way. Three hours, four-

"You refer to Comrade Ellen's husband? If I may butt in, I think he is almost certain to stay away. I should not worry. I gather you are all going somewhere by airplane, and there is no room for me? In any case, I would be reluctant to leave Moscow, my home town, at present. . . . Pray take this keepsake from me, Comrade Brusha. It is a fountain-pen, but it will not write. Unscrew it, and see the reason. It is a mystery to me."

Dayton looked at the wise and solemn face, then obeyed. There was a screw of flimsy paper tightly wadded in the barrel of the fountain-pen, and he knew what it was before he drew it out with his finger-tips. It was the formula of Actinium X, which was a probable cure for cancer turned into wickedness and death.

"God! You strange creature!" said Bruce Dayton.

Sasha shrugged.

"It is valuable? Okaypartner!" he

said, smiling impishly. Even when the big black airplane roared up into the chill and yellow dawn, it was hard to throw off the sense of dreaming, of rather sinister unreality. Moscow fell below, all lights and snowcovered domes and roseate steam.

The masquerade had passed musteror so it seemed. Secrecy and haste had evidently been enjoined about the journey of Karl Racker to the Ukraine. The waiting officials of the flying-field worked on ball-bearings. It was mere embarkation and departure.

JOBODY spoke. Kirilov, in his pilot's cabin, put out the lights as the sun rose. Dayton looked at Ellen Moncrieff and grimaced at the painted face she turned, before taking out her handbag to clean up. Dayton was glad of Racker's great fur coat. And Johnny-Ivan, in the flying-suit of Ellen's husband, looked the genuine article. Racker and Tanya lay behind, bundled and gagged, in one of a hundred old closets of the Brodzky Palace. And yet that unreality, that nearness of padded paws playing with them, still persisted. . . .

The formula had been burned to ashes in Ellen's stove, where Dayton had flung it. Its cunning hiding-place had proved that the German did not trust the GPU, and very likely he had no copy. Bruce Dayton felt his mission accomplished; if ironically and by chance. He felt a

sudden unsteady happiness.

"Ellen, I think your husband's dead."

"I think he is, Bruce."

He bent forward and looked into her eyes, and they both smiled. That was all. The airplane climbed over woolly snow-clouds, into knife-edged sunshine. It swooped and hummed steadily on its way over white and desolate steppes, over towns where the colored domes of Peter and Catherine were overhung with the belching smoke of the second Five Year Plan, over illimitable forests and marshes, deep in snow. Three hours, four-"We shall hit Roumania soon after

noon," said Ivan Kirilov, breaking a long silence. "Poland would be nearer. But we must keep to the route if we're not

to excite suspicion. And besides—"
"Besides what? Something's biting you, Johnny-Ivan. Tell us."
"It chances that I am connected with Villinev, in the Ukraine," said Kirilov, staring at the gleaming instrument-board before him. "You know that in Russia there are always dreamers? Some score of them, friends of mine, are in Villinev. Good citizens, and powerful men, but against the secret police. Idealists, if you like.... I think Racker's delightful weapon was to be tried out on them. It would be convenient to have them insane. By an unfortunate accident, shall we say? The wrong sort of tear-gas when the misguided zealots tried to resist arrest, for instance! After I have put you safely across the Dneister, I want to warn them."

"You mean you'll come back into

Russia?"

"No," replied Johnny-Ivan with an irony that was quite genuine, "I shall desert my country and become a capitalist. Probably one of your Wall Street bankers. You amuse me, my Bruce."

"Look!" cried Ellen sharply.

Black and clear in the sky to the northward where old Kiev had glittered on the horizon for a moment or two a few minutes before, half a dozen small monoplanes were visible. They hung like motes in the sunshine—motes that grew larger with each second. Johnny-Ivan swung round to look at them. He made a wry face at the radio-apparatus.

"Of course. The police in Moscow would be asking kindly after us by radio—and getting no reply, since we have neither the code nor the wave-length nor anything else. Quite possibly they telephoned the Brodzky Palace, and then went to investigate. The result, you perceive. They are very efficient, I tell you. The wires have been humming."

The big plane boomed forward like a sentient bird, and with a kind of fatalism which they knew had been all the time on them, Dayton and Ellen turned to watch the pursuit. The monoplanes came in fan formation, scout-planes of the Kiev League of Chemical and Air Defense, probably, commandeered by the gigantic machine of the secret police at a few words from Moscow. Visibly they came nearer. Dayton saw Ellen's lips frame the question, "Machine-guns?" and answered her.

"I expect so. And we're no more than a hundred miles from the frontier. I wish you hadn't come, Ellen."

"I'm glad I did."

THERE were scarlet flecks of fire at the nose of the nearest monoplane, and one faint ripping sound at the cabinroom over their heads. The airplane dropped, with the squadron swooping after. It was more than likely that the burst had been a summons to surrender and fall in between the squadron as a prisoner. But Johnny-Ivan was climbing again, roaring toward a thick woolly bank of clouds. He dodged as his lightning-swift pursuers mounted, and the big machine under him thundered with the

strain. Then—they were in the falling snow, blinded and shut out from the planet in a howling white tempest. . . .

Ten minutes. Johnny-Ivan watching his instruments, was flying in a wide circle, in the murk of the snowstorm, to shake off and baffle his pursuers; then abruptly he tore through the wall of the storm into misty sunshine. There was no sign of the mosquito squadron, but Kirilov pointed with his finger to the oilgauge and laughed exhaustedly. It was almost at zero, and a spray of hot black oil was melting the snow of the weatherglass. The short burst of machine-gun fire had achieved more than a warning. One of the oil-supply pipes was cut through.

Below, a white wilderness, stretching as far as the eye could reach. Black forests and snow-covered marshes. No living creature to see an airplane chartered by the Moscow GPU come down, silently, clumsily, but safely, onto the

frozen snow of the steppe.

A minute or two Ivan Kirilov stood staring at the helpless machine. Then he shook himself. His face was haggard and fierce for a moment before its fine

and gentle mask came back.

"We must move. That squadron will certainly come searching for us. So first we must let them know the ill fate that has overtaken us. Are you curious to know where we are, my Bruce? We are on the Ukranian steppe, about seventy miles east of Villinev. There are villages—somewhere. But I happen to know there is famine in the Ukraine at the moment, though they do not mention it in Moscow. Strangers are not welcome in famine. . . . Well, we will light the bonfire."

The airplane was a red gout of flame and smoke visible far down the aisles of the forest a few minutes later. As they moved through the soft white silence, Bruce Dayton, Ellen Moncrieff and Ivan Kirilov turned to watch it. A deep weariness was on them, a weariness of soul, rather than of body. Somewhere a wolf barked. It sounded derisive.

BRUCE DAYTON, slouching into the slushy square of Villinev ten days afterward, was ready to swear that he had been in peasant Russia the most of a lifetime.

He was gaunt, dirty and empty-bellied. Among the murmuring deputation of peasants who had come in sledges to Villiney, he made the genuine article, one of three mere wandering vagabonds that they took him to be. There was bread for sale in Villinev, a market and a coöperative, and only bony famine in the

village of the steppe.

"No rough-stuff, comrades," came a nervous warning from the leader, the chairman of one of the village soviets. "We are no match for Red Guards and police, and the place reeks of them all at once. But after all, we are their brothers. Wait here. I will announce the

deputation."

Dayton watched the man, blue-lipped, sunken-cheeked, stumble across the filth and mud of the square. There was something saturnine about Villinev. Red Guards and GPU horsemen watched the mob of sheepish but desperate peasants impassively from the gateway of the squat black little kremlin. He was glad that, to lessen suspicion, Ellen and Johnny-Ivan had agreed to wait with the sledges by the old wall of the town. . . . Bread, food of any kind, and they would face the last and almost hopeless venture of all, and try to cross the frozen river into Roumania. . . .

Then Dayton saw that something untoward was happening. The chairman of the village soviet appeared again at the studded wooden door of the local kremlin, where he had timidly entered—appeared suddenly. He was erupted as by a sling, and went into the filth on his knees, with blood gushing from his

mouth.

"Mother of God! Fly, comrades!"

It was the serf-cry of the old beaten and battered peasant of Russia, as terror put the clock back for them. No more than twelve years before, the Reds and Whites had slaughtered them indiscriminately; less than five years ago the troops had ridden them down for beating up a few communist schoolmasters from Moscow. The jingle of bits and bridles was enough for them.

HALF a dozen of the horsemen in the gateway came riding out. With the flats of their swords they laid about them almost good-humoredly. Dayton wheeled from their path, cursing the mixture of weakness and insensate fury that made him unable to move quickly. In the bright sunshine a blade flashed above him, and a laugh of hearty and brutal amusement rang from the handsome young Red Guard who grinned down at him. He dodged; and then, because hunger and desperation and sick-

ness of everything must have robbed him of his senses for a moment, he did an insane thing. He took the automatic from beneath his mangy fur coat and shot the laughing Red Guard through the shoulder.

PROBABLY it was a sword-hilt that dropped him, though he never knew. When he came to, he was looking into the large red face of Racker. The man sat in a wooden armchair, in some big oak-beamed room where an open fire blazed, leaned his elbows on a table, and pressed his huge fingers together.

"Checkmate, Dayton mein Freund," said the German gravely. "I came on from Moscow, as you perceive. Ach, you are thin as a scarecrow, and dirty. True, I had your face scrubbed to make sure, though the very efficient police had traced you to the last village. I also searched you, but I did not recover my formula."

Out of his despair Dayton managed a smile. He thought of Ellen and Johnny-Ivan, and prayed they would understand what had happened to him. He said:

"Forget it, my dear Prussian beast.

It's burned."

Racker's mouth parted in a wet gash as he raised his fist as though to crash it into the American's face, then lowered if

"So?" The heavy gray eyes, soaked to bestiality with cocaine, flickered lazily. "It matters nothing. I was paid handsomely in Moscow. Now I am on vacation. I myself mean to enjoy."

Dayton sat roughly bound. Sick and ill as he was, he still smiled derisively, because he knew himself to be completely lost. All he prayed was that Ellen and Ivan had got clear. This German rogue-elephant seemed to be at home in the old kremlin of Villinev. None of the bleak efficiency of Moscow was there. Suddenly:

"The Governor!" bellowed Racker.

Stand!"

He plucked the American out of his chair, then flung him back again with a loud laugh. A little squat man with black hair streaked over his brutish forehead, and a soiled uniform on his tubby carcass, entered, stared with wet green eyes at Dayton, and then smiled almost fawningly at Racker.

"They are arrested—the man and the woman," he said. "It was a neat capture. As for the peasants, they have fled. They will not revolt any more....

Do you suggest a threefold shooting, Comrade Racker?"

"This man is my meat," answered

Racker softly.

Fight it as Dayton would, a deadly weakness wrapped itself about him again. When he came to, there was a plate of hot bortsch before him, white bread and a flask of coarse Ukrainian wine. He ate with the helpless hunger of an animal, aware of Racker and the Governor floating about like twin heads of one ugly giant. Aware that Ellen and Johnny-Ivan were caught and doomed, as he himself was. . . .

himself was....
"And now," said Racker, "I myself will enjoy. The back-tickler, if you please, my dear Governor. And the necessary warrant. One must go through

the process."

It was easy to see that Karl Racker was next door to a maniac. His huge body swayed in a sort of rhythm as he ceremoniously accepted from the governor of the kremlin of Villinev a large red seal to which was attached a piece of parchment scrawled with many names. In the Moscow museums there were many such: knout-warrants. The old czars had used them to hold the names of those who had died under that medieval torture.

"A hundred strokes!" The little governor pursed his lips. "That was the equivalent to a death-sentence in the

days of reaction."

Racker bared shining teeth. "In installments," he said. "Bring out your

museum piece."

He took and caressed the lash of rawhide and metal rings which had probably been used in the Villinev kremlin in the days of the Ivans. Between his two guards Dayton lurched upright. The empty wine-bottle on the table spun up into the German's face, cleverly and adroitly flung by his bound hands. Later, he thought his purpose had been to make Racker shoot him there and then. One of the guards lifted his bayonet.

One of the guards lifted his bayonet. "Gott!" shouted Racker with a screaming laugh. "He must not lose his

senses again. Bring him!"

IT was a frog-march. Dayton saw sunshine and the high black wall of a small prison-yard. There was nothing GPU about this. It was Russia of Peter the Great, who had flogged his own son to death, and then wept over the bloody body. A propaganda artist of modern Moscow would have found it good for a

poster about the days of Czarism. There was a mass of rusty old torture-instruments, ejected probably from the dungeons of the old place; but one of them looked in fairly good condition yet. This was a low wooden gallows with two iron staples, to which Dayton's hands were trussed. The clothes were ripped from his back. He trapped his mouth firmly. Over his shoulder he saw Racker, also stripped to the waist. The man, bow-windowed and overfleshed, looked a fiend incarnate.

THE first blow of the terrible instrument he wielded came like some shock right out of hell in its jarring agony. After that, Bruce Dayton threw back his head and looked up at the blue sky. When it began to turn black before his

sight, it was easier to bear.

He did not count the strokes. They were probably ten, which was prescribed in the old penal code when there was no death-warrant, for Racker's medieval soul had gone right back into the old Russia that was, after all, the Prussian's spiritual home. Then Racker cut his uplifted hands free and licked thick lips, like a man who had tasted the mere hors d'œuvres of a banquet.

"Tomorrow morning at daybreak will come the remainder. This was but my feelings to work off. The night I will leave to you. Listen somewhere about midnight. There will be two shots. We are being kind to your two companions."

A few minutes later, the door of one of the cells of the Villinev kremlin closed behind a weak and collapsed Dayton. It was noisome, cold and insanitary. But slowly the agony of his lacerated back went away. He had not seen the tubby little governor again, for he kept timidly in the background. In that one-horse little citadel of remote Russia, the German was the dominant spirit for the time being, and the governor his jackal. Somewhere, even in Russia of the Machines the old comic provincial Russia that Dostoievsky wrote of, cropped up. . . .

Dostoievsky wrote of, cropped up. . . . Ellen and Ivan. They must have been caught easily. And he had to listen,

powerless. Utterly powerless.

There was a clock with a cracked chime in the crazy old tower of the kremlin. It thudded nine, ten, eleven, at intervals of an eternity each. When midnight went, Dayton, lying on his damp pallet, raised his head. He knew that if he flung himself, raving, at the cell door, he would only pander to Rack-



er's fine taste for torment. And suddenly it seemed to him that death by bullet was a clean and antiseptic thing. He himself did not deserve it. There was, after all, something fit that he who had brought them to it should be flogged to death by a madman in the morning....

A kind of muffled door-bang, somewhere in the building. A second one, crisper. Both pistol-shots. . . .

There were, no doubt, Bruce Dayton pondered, many different sorts of lunacy. That of Karl Racker, for instance—and his own. A shabby guard had brought him breakfast. Not Racker, so there was no chance of beating his brains out in the cell. If he could do that, he would die happy. His head ached worse than his back, with thinking out the way how. Battered as he was, he had the strength. When the door opened he was arched like a cat for the remote chance. But the three guards fell on him and bound him.

Racker was a smooth-skinned baboon, loping ahead into the yard, the knout dangling over his own naked shoulders. He grinned evilly.

"Did you hear, last night? It was quite official and in accordance with practice. The woman struggled a little, I regret to say. But it was soon over."

"You doped bullock," said Dayton steadily. "Why tell me about your dreams? I saw them both clear across the river before I came into Villinev."

"After I have warmed myself a little, you shall see certain proof," said Racker, "—that is, if you can see at all then."

The sky was no longer blue. It was gray and wintry above the high walls of the prison-yard, and it was scarcely dawn. Racker, rubbing his bare torso, snarled to the guards. Dayton, with his hands upraised and lashed, stared bitterly at the wooden cross-arm of the frame which ran just above his head. True, he was alone with the German now. The guards had retired to leave Racker to his enjoyment—and perhaps the little gover-

not did not wish to be mixed up with such a czarist and anti-social business as the knout.

The crossbar near Dayton was mildewed and moss-grown with age. There were some Russian characters scratched on the soppy surface of the wood, quite recently. The chairman of some visiting komintern perhaps, making his mark on the barbaric instrument. Dayton read them without realization at first—

The staples will come away with a good wrench, comrade.

He gazed stupidly. It was like some brutal joke that called for more than the brain could bear, to appreciate. He heard the metal of the knout jingle behind him, and it made his back cringe. Racker took in a deep breath for the first stroke. Then savage humiliation

overcame every other feeling in Dayton, and he plucked his right hand with all his strength. It came free, and with it the .left; and he swung round with a shout that it was impossible to repress. Racker fell back, his face distorted, dismayed. Down upon the German's pate crashed the heavy staple that was still lashed to Dayton's wrist. Right and left, the most terrible right and left Bruce Dayton, who was not unknown as an amateur boxer, had ever dealt. The half-naked brute crumpled without a cry to the flagged ground.

Something made Dayton look up to the top of the high wall. It was an incredible suspicion rather than any material hope. But it was well-founded. A head with an astrakhan cap bobbed there; a rough rope ladder came curling down and slapped against the wall.



"Hurry, comrade!" It was Sasha the Frog of Moscow, speaking encouragingly.

But halfway up the ladder, Dayton's tortured back stiffened, stuck; the very spine seemed to break and let him down. In a distant doorway came a shout that started him scrambling again, groaning as he went. He was on the flat top of the bastion-like wall when a bullet snored the stone to powder by his side.

"Hounds of Hades!" greeted Sasha. "Squeeze yourself flat, comrade. We must have the ladder back at any cost,

you understand."

SALVO of lead came humming past A them, but the trajectory was difficult from the deep well of the prison yard. Sasha worked at his ladder like a monkey who has finished his trick, and cursed as one of the bullets took away his astrakhan cap. Flat on his belly, he began to fumble in the inner pocket of his great-

"Well, then, they shall have the other onion, though I was growing fond of it, I had saved it for so long. But one must

not be sentimental."

The Frog pulled out the second of the small bombs which he had picked from the pocket of Racker that night in Moscow, and threw it. Because he knew it was the Actinium X, his companion followed its flight fascinatedly. Some constituent change must have taken place in its contents, or Racker's workmanship was bad. It was no mere petard of teargases, for an explosion took place that seemed to rock that part of the citadel, and enveloped it in red lightning for a The doorway crumbled and moment. fell in smoke; some ragged fragments that it was well not to look at went sky-A hot blast of air smote the American and the unbelievable imp who had revealed himself. It almost shook them from their grip on the high wall. There was a minute or two when Sasha clawed vainly to get his ladder hooked for the descent, and then they were on the ground on the other side, in a deep and dry culvert barely a stone's-throw from the outside gates of the Villinev kremlin.

Sasha retrieved his cap and said:

"Wait. You are hardly dressed for the occasion. Your back is like Red Square after a demonstration, and would be noticeable. Stay here."

Bruce Dayton could do nothing but obey. Any moment, he told himself, he would be captured. Though Racker would never complete his hundred strokes now, there was alarm, and the turningout of guards audible, and the blare of a bugle out in the square. Yet Sasha the Frog had got through and returned, for he was there with a bundle under his arm—a greatcoat, a cap with ear-flaps, boots-and brandy. Dayton caught the little bez prizorny by the arm.

"Sasha! You're real, I guess. It's damned little use, all this."

"Nothing is, in this life," agreed Sasha philosophically; "but one keeps on doing it. Listen to the *trepak* that they're dancing over the wall! That onion was a stronger-smelling one than the first, and did considerable damage. Presently we shall slip out. Drink the brandy. . . . This is better than Moscow. Things were very slow there after you left in the airplane. Somehow, I thought there would be a hitch."

Sasha listened. The clatter of a fireengine sounded. The Frog nodded with

satisfaction.

"Ten thousand rubles of good valuta to a kopeck, that their water-supply is frozen. I shall send in an anonymous accusation to Moscow. They are as inefficient as the old régime. The governor is a drunkard, and that German has-or should I say had?—hold of him, body and soul. I got very thick with the little vodka-barrel's body-servant. Pish! am at home anywhere. I was born in the Ukraine, I think, though I could not swear to it. You wonder how I got I had my own private berthhere? under a dozen different trains. It was worse in the villages where the famine is. But I took the skin from a dead wolf I found in the woods, and went with it into some of the houses at night-time. The village-women are still talking of the little werewolf, for they have not all had a college education, yet. They thought it was their babies I was after, but I was content with what food I could find. Now we will try the get-away while they are playing at merry Beelzebub inside there, comrade!"

WHATEVER was happening, the pet prisoner of the German who had wielded a brief influence there seemed forgotten for the moment. Dayton and Sasha found themselves out among the old wooden houses of the square, moving unnoticed in the babble and excitement. A foaming prison-governor was visible dancing round a futile and dryly coughing fire-engine; there was a cordon of guards-no horsemen now, Dayton saw, and guessed they had been some squadron which had returned to its frontier post, or was billeted in some other part of the town.

A gentle tug at his sleeve. Sasha was moving without hurry through the motley crowd that crammed the square. Presently they were on the outskirts, where the broken walls of the old town ended in thick pine woods.

"We are honest charcoal-burners, comrade," said Sasha. "There is no need to

hasten."

"No need," Dayton agreed with a harsh laugh. "For the Amerikanka and Johnny-Ivan were shot in that kremlin last night."

"I heard the shots. At the moment I was working loose the staples on that whipping-block in the yard of the

prison."

Sasha stuck his fingers into his mouth to warm them. Probably he knew sudden death so well that he could show no shock. But he took Dayton's arm and pulled him compassionately through the undergrowth.

HOW long it took, the American did not know. Neither did he inquire of Sasha their ultimate destination. It seemed of little moment, since a man could not sink to more terrible depths of failure than to come to a country only to bring destruction on the woman he loved, and on a man like Johnny-Ivan.

Through the forest trees there was the sheen of what looked like a broad snowfield, plowed with black furrows. But quite close in one of the furrows smoked the red funnel of a small steamer, and Dayton realized it was the broad river Dneister, frozen hard; and the steamer was an ice-breaker, moored to the shore.

"Across there, I understand," said Sasha the Frog, spitting out surreptitiously, "all your capitalist countries lie stewing in their juice, Comrade Brusha. You have a passage booked on the little steamer there. Come, I will see you

aboard."

Dayton looked at the Frog wearily. Always the unbelievable happened in that unbelievable country. He laughed, but felt the same deep lassitude and indifference.

"Quick, over the gangway and down into the cabin," Sasha directed. "Just for safety's sake. And prepare for a surprise.'

"Johnny-Ivan!" gasped Bruce Dayton.

"And Ellen!"

He leaned against the wall of the greasy little cabin, and Ivan Kirilov in the flesh caught his hands and was lowering him into a seat. Over Johnny-Ivan's shoulder Ellen's face, with her eyes shining, swam before his vision. Real, alive!

"Didn't that Satan's imp tell you we were here, my Bruce? We're cursed with the dramatic sense—all of us in this

country, even the bez prizorny."

CASHA the Frog lit a cigarette. He gave an angelic grin at Ivan.

"It was Racker's trick. He pretended to capture and shoot you and Comrade Ellen. To add to the American's torments. They do that in Germany, I understand, since Hitler came into power. Though we do it in Russia now and again, I confess. . . . I don't think you and I had better stay aboard too long, Comrade Kirilov. This steamer will want to begin to break some more ice."

Dayton stood before Ellen, and looked

at her through a mist.

"They never caught you?" he asked. "No. Ivan's friends helped us—the

friends Racker was to have used his—his stuff on. The police got some of them and took them back to Moscow. But not all of them. The captain of this boat is one. It goes close enough to the Roumanian shore to allow us to land. There are a lot of loose ends, bits one will never know, Bruce. . . . There always are in Russia."

A steam-valve of the little ice-breaker began to hiss nervously. Ivan Kirilov smiled with his whimsical sadness.

"It was a hot round," he said. "The GPU is still there. But I think Russia will still beat it, in the end. Judge us not yet. Good-by, my Bruce. You finished your own mission, at any rate, and saved Ellen. Be happy."

The little craft started quietly. A panic-stricken Sasha the Frog, slightly green at the thought of being carried by mistake to the capitalist countries, leaped ashore and gestured farewell. A friendly ice-fog began to creep up the river.

Mr. Wood is at work on another novel for us-different in scene but even more highly dramatic than "The Frog of Moscow" or "Red Terror." In an early issue.

Keep Out of Banks

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

E mainmost thing you is got to do,"—the dusky detective Columbus Collins glared down at the overalled form of his five-foot assistant "Bugwine" Breck,—"is keep out of banks!"

"Gits in Hossford Burnam's bank by

mistake."

"Yeah—Hossford's mistake! But don't let it happen again. Here I was, jest about to sell Hossford on us protectin' his bank against flimflammers and bandits, when you got to come gallopin' in tryin' to git change for a Confederate bill. Mess de deal all up, makin' him think de agency aint bright in de brains!"

"I was tryin' to bust dat ten into two fives, so I could buy one of 'em from dat Birmingham boy for two bucks I had,"

defended Mr. Breck resentfully.

"Do it again, and I busts you wid two fives!" His employer thrust both fists illustratively under Bugwine's shuddering nose. "Country gittin' full of bank bandits; and I was jest fixin' to sell Hossford when you— Ugh-oh! Somebody comin'!"

Mr. Breck relaxed in relief: old sub-

ject was fixing to get changed!

"Y'all de big detectin' boys?" A dark, disconsolate, and bandaged individual had limped to a halt in the doorway. Sartorially, he bore resemblance to the other half of a bad collision with a buzz-saw—and facially, to a scorched rabbit.

"Smells 'em out whar others jest sniffs about," Columbus launched listlessly into his sales-talk: boys that looked like

this never had any money.

"Must be de right place, den." The newcomer fished in his pockets as he spoke—giving Columbus a glimpse of greenery that galvanized him into a one-

man Scotland Yard.

"Rally wid a chair, Bugwine! Snap into service for de client!" he barked on sight. Then, to the visitor, "Sho is come to de right place! You name de crime—us names de crook! All broke out wid service. What your name? What de case?"

Even the client cheered up. "Name's Acoustics Henderson," he divulged hopefully. "And gits run over—"

"Drives dem big trucks too fast," Bugwine entered the situation sympathetically—and found his superior's palm pushing his face out of a cash case.

"Spit out de circumstances!" Columbus couldn't wait for that bill he'd seen.
"Done swallered 'em when dat car hit me," Acoustics muffed a big word.

"Means how-come you git run over?"
"One dem hit-and-run drivers. Scatters me and de mule all over Strawberry Street—wid my wagon—about five o'clock in de mornin'."

"Is you git his number?" Mr. Collins

was all business.

"Aint git nothin'!"

"So you craves for us to sniff out who

done it?"

"Already knows who done it. I sees him every mornin' when I's walkin' to work, now he done bust up de wagon."

"Sees who? What his name?"

"Aint know his name."

"You means," puzzled Columbus, "you sees him every day, and aint know him, and still aint git his number, neither?"

"Dat what git my goat!" burst frustratedly from the client. "I sees dat number every day, when he drives past me, but it aint do me no good—"

"How-come it aint?"

"Becaze I cain't read: aint know what

it is when I looks at it."

Light broke over Columbus like an explosion. Such ignorance was an asset to him. "Fee's two bucks," he flung himself into the case by repeating the denomination of the bill he had seen in Acoustics' pocket. "Mist' Breck here, de Human Bloodhound, is in full charge de agency's Hit-and-Run department. You stands hitched a minute while us confers in de back."

IN the agency's rear room, Mr. Breck looked apprehensive: when he was put in charge of a new department suddenly this way, something generally got sawed off on him.

His chief whirled on him with: "Gummed up de deal I was about to make wid de bank, aint you? Well, here whar you redeems yourself—or I stomps you so thin you aint got but one side! Dis case so simple even you cain't mess it up! All you got to do is go wid de client in de mornin', read dat hit-andrunner's license-number when he goes by—den go to de courthouse and git his name, and us got him—C.O.D."

"How-come 'C.O.D.'?" Mr. Breck mistrusted initials since that white man had got four days' work out of him, relaying

sidewalks, and calling it CWA!

"Means cash on delivery: cash to me

when you delivers de crook."

The door opened now interruptingly, to admit the glum, rabbit-faced Acoustics. "Craves to see dat boy some more what detects so good," he indicated Bugwine.

"Bugwine Breck aint never slip up," Columbus shot back under the influence

of that greenback.

"Always gits my man!" bragged Bugwine under the stimulus of praise from Cæsar

"Mist' Breck be right wid you in de mornin', read dat hit-and-runner's number and jail him for you, C.O.D." Columbus kept on stalking Acoustics' two dollars.

Bugwine exploded in the midst of expansion as a forgotten fact punctured him like a tack in a tire: if Acoustics couldn't read, neither could he! Yet he was already committed to, by Columbus, with a two-dollar fee for Columbus gone up in smoke if he didn't. Two swallows might make a summer, but never two illiterates a reader. Mr. Collins had bitten off more than Bugwine could chew, plus a fresh fire liable to get built in a boy's pants if the blind fell down on leading the blind tomorrow morning.

Wild thoughts of learning to read overnight arose and were dismally downed before the fact that if Mr. Breck had been unable to master reading in twentyfour years, twenty-four hours wasn't lia-

ble to save him now.

"Meets you up by de Mornin' Star Baptist Church in de mornin', before sunup, Mist' Henderson," dissembled Bugwine hoarsely as the best his brain could do in the emergency. He could always hope for a mess of luck like being hit by a truck, and thus avoid the issue after all.



Ten thousand bottles falling down an elevator-shaft would make less noise than Detective Bugwine Breck made, protecting a bank from bandits.

But with the cash-client shortly gone in preliminary satisfaction, that canny wolf in sheep's clothing, Columbus, shucked his fleece in a hurry. "Kills off two birds wid one rock dis way," he started writing his fine Italian hand with a stub pen. "Gits you out of de way so you cain't mess me up solicitin' Hossford's bank-protectin'; and puts you out on a job what even a boy as dumb as you is cain't gum up!"

Mr. Breck eyed his future and the hoof-hole in his straw-hat with equal lugubriousness, until, under stress, inspiration flashed over him. Reflation instantly set in, to become visible to the

naked eye-Columbus' eye.

"Seen a old inner-tube look like you once, jest before it busted," his comment carried a question.

"Done thunk up somethin'!" bugled

Mr. Breck enigmatically.

"You done what? Wid what?" Mr. Collins' questions were insults by inflection.

"Gwine cotch dat hit-and-runner widout waitin' to read his number. Sics science on him," Bugwine headlined his detour around illiteracy.

"All you says is words."

"Means whoever hit Acoustics dat hard bound to have busted up whole front end de car. Liable be mule's footsteps all over de radiator, too. Puts de bloodhound, Coney Island, in sidecar de motorcycle, and starts sniffin' for suspects-

"Yeah—and have dat pooch treein' Hossford Burnam, de bankin'-boy I's tryin' to sell, first crack out de box too!" Experience embittered Mr. Collins' voice.

"Coney had de distemper dat time: sniffin' noble in de nose now," Bugwine brushed aside previous olfactory errors.

"You mess me up wid Hossford again, and I cooks dat damn' dawg and feeds him to hisself for breakfast!" threatened Columbus darkly. "Also, you keep out of banks till I lands dis one."

"Any time I goes in no bank, it's de wrong number," defended Mr. Breck doggedly. "Heah, Coney, Coney! Sic 'em, Coney! Crooks, here us come!"

CHORTLY after, there burst over Baptist Hill the professional uproar of a sleuth on the scent. When Bugwine Breck detected he hid no lights under a bushel. Motorcycle back-firing, radio volleying a bedlam of blues, bedtime stories, and cooking-recipes, Demopolis' dusky Sherlock took the trail. Adenoidal admirers lined the curbs to see a hit-andrunner's Nemesis whiz past, with the multi-ancestored Coney yelping incessantly in the sidecar.

"Bugwine ought to git hisself a car: dat pooch gwine bark hisself plumb out dat bathtub some day," ran sidewalk

"Bugwine tryin' trade in de 'cycle on a car now—dem kind of motorcycles aint movin' easy since 1919," ran complementary rebuttal.

ISGUSTEDLY Columbus heard the clamor pass and die. When the Hill again was quiet and business safe from half-wit interruptions, he would set forth on one final supreme effort to sell Banker Burnam—and to eat.

"Git shet of dat Bugwine, soon as I signs up Hossford," Mr. Collins promised himself yearningly. "Git more class and

less fleas around de agency!"

Spiritually and physically, an hour later, the lower half of the doorway to the Collins detective agency darkened.

"Who dar?" rasped Columbus without

looking.

"It's me-Bugwine," came a still small

Columbus whirled about, perplexed. "Whar all de fuss?" he asked sharply.

"What fuss?" Mr. Breck's overalls were strangely oversize for him-as if some collapse had occurred inside them.

"What you left here wid. Couldn't see you for de noise you was makin'. Whole Hill littered up wid dust and hollerin'. And now what happen? Whar-at de crook you gwine cotch? Whar-at de bloodhound?"

A yelp almost canine in its anguish burst from Mr. Breck. "De dawg-wagon git him!" he shrilled.

"De dawg-wagon?" Something new in sleuthing had Columbus stunned.

Bugwine jarred a couple of rafters in

fresh lamentation.

"Git him how?" Mr. Collins' fingers made clutching movements toward his assistant's neck.

"Aspirin Edwards drivin' de dawgwagon now," mourned Bugwine. "On commission—dime a dawg. Ties piece of meat on a string, and Coney Island foller it right on into de cage like it was a crook! Den Aspirin, he shet de door! -And white folks says two bucks to bail him out."

But fresh and further import of his aide's latest professional faux pas here swept Columbus like twin typhoons. "Boy," he raved as Mr. Breck shot under the agency's sink, "all you keeps gittin' is dumber! Here I jest about to try and git Hossford back up to de dottedline again, when you got to pull dis!"

"Hossford aint got nothin' do wid dis:

dis here was Aspirin-"

"Naw, but you is!" A slight foam flecked Mr. Collins' straining jaw. "All time gummin' up de works! First time I gits Hossford all set to sign, what is you do? Busts in de bank right smack in de middle de deal, and tries to pass phony money on him! I gits all set to go back after him again, and what is you do? Starts out hellin' and hollerin' after a crook—throwin' dust all over everybody—and de dawg-wagon gits your bloodhound!"

Bugwine cowered under the sink and looked upward, spiritually, at snakes' basements. Also at the fact that he was again in bad, and again committed to read that license-number for Acoustics. Hell had no fury like Columbus knocked out of a two-dollar fee—except Columbus knocked out of a regular contract protecting a bank.

Sounds simulating a trapped tomcat in a well were emitted by Mr. Breck, to give place at length to the only alibi he

could contrive.

"Stirs about and gits dat crook yit," he essayed tentatively as his chief's symptoms subsided slightly. "Liable see de car what hit Acoustics' mule-wagon somewhar."

"You wouldn't know it if you seen it!" snapped Mr. Collins sourly. "But git on out: first time I takes my mind off my hands dey gwine choke you to death

before I can stop 'em!"

Bugwine left with a rush. Again old brains had got a boy in a jam, he mourned to himself as he roared down Strawberry Street. With the agency treasury down to forty cents, he had gummed up its only two prospective cases. He had to capture a hit-and-run driver quickly, therefore, or run himself, before Columbus hit.

INTO the dulled consciousness of a detective striving to rouse the resolution needed to go once more and solicit the business of a banker, there penetrated a sound thus far new even in Hogan's Alley. A hop-skip-and-jump effect, mingling with a wide assortment of rattles and an occasional clink! as something of undoubted importance was shed to the pavement amid the general uproar.



"Y'all de big detectin' boys?" A disconsolate individual had limped to a halt in the doorway.

Curiosity drew Columbus to the door, and consternation held him there, consternation at the sight of Bugwine Breck—Bugwine, who had fared so disconsolately forth on two wheels, was now returning in triumph on four! Radiator a-steam and horn a-honk, the little sleuth sat ivory-toothed at the wheel of an early-American roadster that zigzagged violently from side to side of the alley as he came. Before the agency door the car leaped a foot into the air, shed three parts, and halted shivering in every cam and cotter-pin.

Proudly its chauffeur descended. "Done make a swap!" he waved a dusky hand eloquently, even lovingly, at the self-propelled case of palsy beside him.

"Swapped what for it—couple of old razor blades?" Columbus was caustic.

"Naw-de motorcycle."

"De motorcycle? To who?"

"Boy say he name Beverage Young. Live over back of Spocari, he say. Gimme dis car, wid a license-tag already on it and everything. Swaps even for de motorcycle and two bucks to git Coney bailed out wid, soon as I can drive to de dawg-pound!"

Columbus circled the purchase, coldeyed. "How-come hit ramble all over de street when you drives?" he recalled Mr.

Breck's recent approach.

"Steering-gear got couple foots of



Mr. Collins thrust his serf through the doorway. "Now git your man-or stop by de tombstone place and pick you out one!"

slack in it: rambles while word's gittin'

to de wheels."
"Sho is!" Mr. Collins stooped in disgust to peer underneath the wreck. He

uttered then an ejaculation.
"What de, matter?" Bugwine knew

that grunt.

"No wonder dat Beverage boy rearin" to git shet of it!" snorted Columbus.

Worried furrows came in the Bugwinian brow.

"Old car aint got no brakes!" his chief completed a disgusted diagnosis. Relief spread over Mr. Breck's face. "Dat all?" he voiced it.

"Try and stop it, and it's plenty, aint

"Beverage say aint need no brakes: jest shove it in reverse, and when old car hit de ground again it done stopped."

JOW Mr. Collins understood Bugwine's shuddering halt. But other matters immediately intruded. "Here come dat Acoustics boy back," he looked into the distance. "What you gwine tell de client? Hollerin' round all day, and aint even got a clue yit."

Mr. Breck sickened at his absence of alibis: since the recent big noise Mr. Henderson was looking for a lot, and not getting it-with Bugwine still committed either to producing the crook today or reading his license-number tomorrow.

But it was the client himself who injected a new element into Bugwine's impasse, preceded by a quickening of his gait and the spread of an astonished expression over his rabbitlike features. And, as he neared the watching detectives, he broke into a gallop and whoopings of a hilarious nature.

IS first coherent remark, however, "I'll say you boys is good!" but deepened the pair's perplexity.

"Says all time us was good," Columbust beat the dimmer-witted Bugwine to

this yet-inexplicable credit.
"Aint no time," exulted Acoustics, "till you solutions de mystery and cops de crook!"

"Why, us aint— Owww!" Barely in time, Mr. Collins' foot on Bugwine's bunions in the international signal to inferiors to shut up saved them from inadvertent exposure.

"Jest gives you de case dis mornin'," Mr. Henderson's pæan continued, "and already you is got de crook's car what

hit me-"

The angered look of the startled Columbus collided with the anguished one of his aide.

"Stand hitched, Mist' Henderson," Columbus managed stifled speech through suddenly clenched teeth, "while I confers wid de head of-er-our Hit-and-Run department—in de back room yander!"

Bugwine's apprehension sounded like a sea-gull swallowing an oversized fish. But, propelling his serf before him in fine disregard of the rules of professional precedence, Mr. Collins thrust him through the doorway, and slammed the door behind him. With hunched shoulders, the wall-eyed Mr. Breck awaited the storm.

His chief did not keep him waiting. "Brains, whar is you?" he roared at his aide's shuddering form. "Turns you loose, bayin' noble wid bloodhounds on de trail of a crook—and de dawg-wagon gits de hound! Starts out again, hollerin' and backfirin' all over de Hill on de agency's fine motorcycle, and you swaps it off for two dollars and a wreck wid four wheels and no brakes! Cain't steer and cain't stop! And to who? To de crook you is tryin' to find! Instead of cotchin' him, you swaps him somethin' faster to git away on!"

Words failed Mr. Collins, and he had recourse to fighting the air. A stunned little sleuth gazed upward, open-mouthed and glassy-eyed, and watched bait-worms

going by overhead.

"Now what you gwine tell de client?" Columbus, recovering, returned to the attack.

Through searing moments, Mr. Breck did not know. Every time a boy used his brains, his business got in a jam! Then, as returning sense and circulation took effect, "Always gits my man," he croaked a familiar slogan feebly.

"Is you is, it's a accident!" Mr. Collins' scorn blistered like a blow-torch.

"Gwine git out and run down dat crook yit," moaned a discredited detective weakly.

"Git out after him 'bout one more time, and he arrests you!" Columbus

warmed to his work.

"You tell de client I done gone out de back way—to run down dat crook in his own car," mourned Mr. Breck from his new low. "I knows now what he ridin' on: can tell dat motorcycle a mile off—"

"So could a deaf boy wid ear-muffs on! Keep on kickin' dem brains in de pants now, and you'll git 'em bright as a stunned half-wit's. Started bad in de bank, and you keeps on gittin' wuss! Now, git your man—or stop by de tombstone place before you comes back, and pick you out a good one what you gwine need Sunday!"

"Listen to dat boy,"—Mr. Collins returned in synthetic optimism to the waiting client in the front office,—"and you can hear him closin' in on dat crook what run over you—soon as you slips me one buck on account." The way the case stacked up now, fifty per cent off for cash looked like good business to Columbus.

"Slips you two bucks, soon as I sees dem bars 'tween me and dat hit-and-

runner."

The rest of Mr. Henderson's unsatisfactory remarks were drowned by the mechanical clamor of Bugwine getting away in an unfamiliar car.

"Gits out and circulates about—maybe I see him work!" Acoustics took his admiring if tight-fisted departure.

Columbus tightened his belt and resolution. With the agency's till empty since lunch, a follow-up call on Horseford Burnam, in a last hunger-spurred effort to sell him on their service, loomed ever nearer and more forbidding. Bugwine had blundered to their ruin with Acoustics: all one could hope for was postponement of that revelation there. But, if Bugwine could be kept out of

Horseford's bank another hour, there was a slim and slender chance there yet. And bankers might have their bad points, but they also had cash-money.

Dreading his task like a country boy going to town to get drunk, Mr. Collins donned his dingy derby, and set forth to solicit the hard-eyed Horseford.

ACROSS the lower end of a "blind" street, and looking implacably up it, stood the banking-house of Burnam, flanked on either side by a barber-shop and a barbecue-stand. As Columbus shuffled nervously down the hill toward his prospect, he noted the all-but-deserted street, the sleeping dog in front of the bank, the lone patron standing at the teller's window within it.

Far off—reassuringly far—in the distance was the dulled clamor of Bugwine Breck, combing Demopolis for Beverage Young the hit-and-runner. Mr. Collins dismissed Beverage, Acoustics, all that had to do with Bugwine. Bugwine was safely out of the way now, and Horseford Burnam was about to succumb to salesmanship. Columbus felt it in his bones, and looked forward again to food, on an advance portion of the fee to bind the coming bargain.

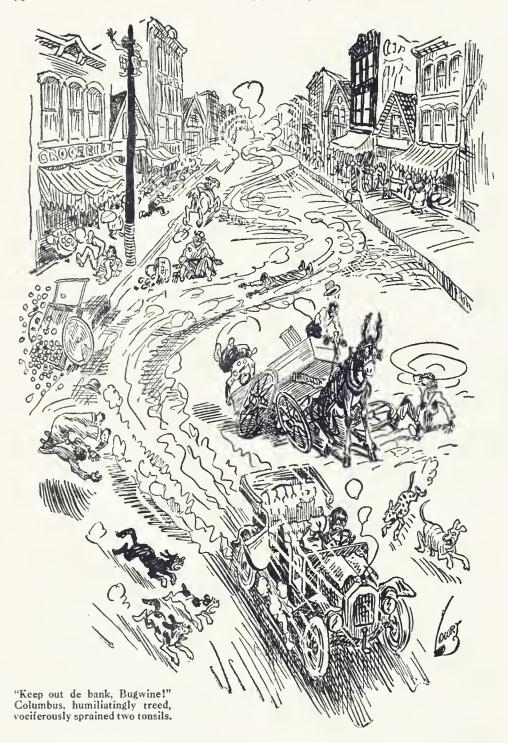
And then, as he descended the hill more happily, a new aspect of the scene engaged his eye—to bathe everything in rosier glow! Where Bugwine was a double failure, he, Columbus, was on the verge of double success! For, parked in front of the barber-shop stood that which Mr. Breck now so vainly sought—the motorcycle that had been theirs! Evidently Beverage was being barbered;

his capture thus made easy!

With a gulp, the great detective broke into a gallop toward it. Dazzlingly the perfection of the stage-setting for him broke over him. Horseford would be an eyewitness to his spectacular capture of the unsuspecting Beverage under the banker's very nose! After which not even a fish-eyed financier could resist the logic of employing so successful a sleuth to protect his own institution.

Thus, when half a block away, Mr. Collins saw everything, including his own exaltation and the witless Bugwine's crowning humiliation. As an assistant sleuth Mr. Breck was washed-up, fired—

Far up the Hill developed an untoward noise, familiar, yet somehow faintly ominous—a noise that penetrated the new complacency of Columbus Collins, and turned his head backward to where—



With the squawk of an astonished sealion, Demopolis' *Sherlock Holmes* rubbed his eyes and ears, but with no improvement in his outlook. For unmistakably down the blind street now clamored Bugwine Breck—in wild and wilder zigzags. And across its end stood Horseford Burnam's bank, in all its plate-glass magnificence! With Horseford at that very

moment talking through its teller's window with his one patron.

"Hit de barber-shop! Hit de barbecue-stand! Keep out de bank!" howled Mr. Collins in sudden frenzy as memory complicated his fears. That car had no brakes!

Ashen-faced and squalling, the oncoming Bugwine took a garbage-can with his

right fender a split-second before he went through a fruit-stand on the opposite side of the street with his left. Between frenzied struggles with gears that he was traveling too fast to shift, the knobeyed little sleuth manned his horn, and horrid honkings awoke the air and aroused the populace.

"Hit de barber-shop!" Columbus' agonized shout rang above the uproar.

Wild-eyed, yowling in his plight, Bugwine took off a porch instead, caroming off it to wreak ruin upon a push-cart filled with fish across the way.

"Beverage's in de barber-shop! Keep out de bank!" Mr. Collins strove to flag

the Juggernaut.

Mr. Breck's answer was a sudden tack to port. Columbus made the first crossarm of the nearest telephone-pole, from a standing start, in three seconds, flat. Here he clung vociferously while the wild chariot of his aide followed furiously the feathered zigzags of a shrieking hen.

"Keep out de bank, Bugwine!" Humiliatingly treed in plainest view, a despairing detective sprained two tonsils in a final futile effort to avert the crash that must inseparably include his own professional prospects along with Horseford's window.

THEN, and only then, Bugwine seemed able at long last to achieve a straight line. Unerring grew his aim. With the crashing clatter of ten thousand bottles being poured down an elevator-shaft, came the inevitable! In a stirring salvo of blown-out tires, the car of Mr. Breck, Bugwine still squalling at its wheel, shot headlong through the window of Burnam's bank-to bring up short at last, in a shuddering halt across an angle of the bank's counter within.

After which a silence fell-sudden, prolonged, awful in its implications. . . .

Columbus' descent from his chosen perch was a cross between sliding down and letting go. Professional ruin awaited him at its bottom, to join with the other ruins his ill-fated associate had just wrought.

"Told dat nigger to keep out of banks!" the racked Mr. Collins gathered his strength angrily, that he might wreak upon his luckless aide such punishment as the wreck might have left undone.

For when Bugwine had so boneheadedly wrecked the bank, he had wrecked all -the car, the window, the last vestige of hope of selling Horseford. He had even given the sought-for Beverage hit-andrunner an opportunity to escape on Bugwine's one-time motorcycle, as curious crowds surged between, blotting out all view of the barber-shop before which Columbus had seen it parked.

"Lemme at him! Lemme through so I can kill him-bustin' de bank!" Mr. Collins fought his way through the bank door. At least, he hoped, his desire to do mayhem upon Mr. Breck would mitigate a little the wrath of Mr. Burnam.

BUT what met Columbus' astonished eyes and ears, when he had cleared the door, but deepened his perplexity. Face to face, eye to eye, stood Horseford Burnam and Bugwine Breck. With Hoyle inexplicably in the discard! For the ruffled banker, instead of belaboring the wrecker of his bank, was shaking him effusively by the hand, his reason evidently unseated by the crash. Then, "-Never is git through thankin' you, Mist' Breck! Sho is noble work!" Mr. Burnam but added to Columbus' mount-

ing bewilderment.

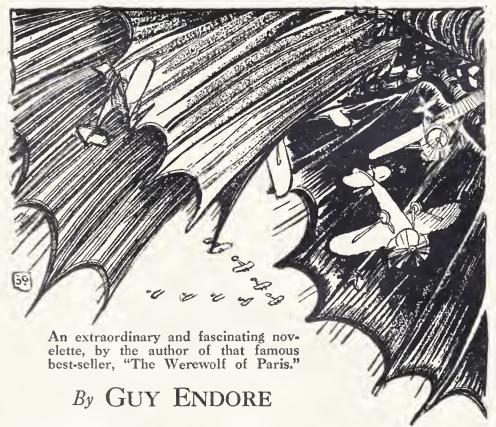
Bugwine, still dazed, was blinking like a loose shutter, swelling like a smalltown soloist. But swelling over what? The mystery deepened as the curious swarmed like bees. Until, as Mr. Collins' perplexed gaze fell and froze upon the cowering occupant of the angle in the bank-counter blocked off by Bugwine's bumper, the answer came—the answer to everything, from that motorcycle parked next door, to Banker Burnam's effusive admiration! Came in Mr. Breck's sudden speech as his grip fell upon the inadvertent prisoner in the counter's angle: "Hits Acoustics' wagon and runs, is you, Beverage Young? —Well, crook, git dis: When I hits 'em dey cain't runspecially is dey busy holdin' up a bank at de time-like you was when I come bustin' through dat window and pins you in de corner wid de bumper of my—your Swaps it back for my motor-—car! cycle now, too--'caze you aint need none in de jail!"

And finally, for a still-stunned Columbus-left with his lost-forever prospect as his strutting little aide headed for the hoosegow with his captive, with half of Baptist Hill gaping in his wake—the startling demand of Banker Burnam: "Whar de hell dat blank, Columbus?"

"Blank?" Even his ears had gone

back on him, feared Mr. Collins!

"Yeah, blank—to sign and git crookprotection wid, like Bugwine renders while you sets squallin' up top a pole!"



The Day of the Dragon

O, in those days no one ever thought of such a peril to the existence of the human race. I was young then, but I recall the times distinctly. Scientists at their annual meetings used to discuss the probability of the termination of the triumphant progress of the human race, but that it should come about in this fashion,—this terrible and at the same time ridiculous fashion,—that, no one ever imagined.

At the present writing it does seem that the complete extinction of all mankind will be delayed, for there must be quite a number of small communities that have found refuge in mines and caves. And though it is long since we have had any word from them, yet in big cities such as Paris, Berlin and London, where there are impregnable subway systems, men and women can still hold out against the terror that ravages the open country. But how long can we last?

Few people, I suppose, are more capable than I of recapitulating the whole

story from its completely insane inception, of which I believe I was, and remain, the only living witness. I have heard lately so many different versions of how it all began that I want to say this: they are for the most part far from the truth. But it is a very human necessity to demand an

explanation of some sort. . . .

Well, as I say, in those days scientists used to imagine many perils to mankind. Some foresaw vast cataclysms; others predicted more subtle scourges. Very frequent was the prophecy that insects would succeed to the rule of the earth. I can still recall clearly a very stirring lecture delivered by a great entomologist. He began by pointing out that though new species of insects were being discovered at the rate of ten thousand a year, and over half a million kinds were already listed, yet by virtue of the processes of evolution, he felt that the insects were increasing their species at a faster rate than they were being catalogued, certainly faster than their widely varying habits were



capable of being studied. So that, in short, as far as insects were concerned, science was playing a losing hand.

whose numerous varieties are already so

high on the rungs of the ladder of progress.

The ant cultivates plants, keeps domestic

animals, has masons and bridge-builders, law-makers and rulers, soldiers and captains. What if some Napoleon of the antworld were to arise and were to ally all the many species of ants into a great confederacy, the object of which would be the subjugation of the earth? What if antscientists were to discover some glandular extract that would cause them to grow to enormous size? Have not bees and many other insects already developed something analogous? What is to prevent them from doing this, then waxing big as rats, to move against mankind in order to enslave and domesticate it? What a comitragedy! Man ending his history in the stalls of vast pyramidal ant-hills—theant's bond-servant, his domestic animal!"

URIOUS, now I think of it, how man has come to a pass that is nearly, if not quite as ridiculous. I must say this lecturer had a pretty clear idea of what would happen, but how it was to come about—that was another matter. He had his guess, to which he was entitled. The guesses of others took different directions. I shan't dwell upon them at length. Now it was the sun that was to become exhausted, whereupon our planet would grow cold, the vast seas frozen to the very bottom and all life refrigerated to death in perfect cold-storage embalming. Again it was the earth that was to cease to revolve, leaving one half of itself parched in perpetual high-noon sunshine, the other frozen in eternal midnight. Or else it was a comet that was to strike our earth and shatter it into a million inconsequential planetoids.

To such cataclysmic horrors others opposed more subtle dangers. Did not the statistics on insanity show that its rate of increase was such that it would not be long before the whole world was a raving madhouse, in which such poor normal beings as might remain would have a far from enviable fate? Would not, so other students asked, the increasing use of fuel disturb the balance of the atmosphere? Would not the use of oil by motor-ships give rise to a scum of oil on the seas? In short, were we not about to blanket the earth and the waters and shut out the health-giving ultra-violet rays without

which life is impossible?

Ah, but that we should be attacked and destroyed by a legendary animal—no, that I never heard from the mouth of any of these scientists. Why, such an animal does not even exist, they would have said. Ridiculous! A fabulous monster? Why,

that's pure myth! Oh, good enough, I suppose for fairy-tale writers and for artists with lively fancies. But we serious—

Well, it was out of just such legends that it came about. That sounds strange and impossible, but it is true. Listen:

In the old days, in the golden era when mankind walked out care-free into the great light, where the laughing sun played on the pied fields, and the good breeze blew—I was then a reporter; and I well remember the time I was called upon to do a story on a live toad said to have been immured for a billion years in rock. That

was the beginning of it.

In some upstate county, this toad hopped out of a kind of natural bubble in the stone, hopped out just as the stonecutter's chisel broke through into the airhole. And the workman, flabbergasted, ran to the editor of the village paper and there gasped out his tale. A local amateur geologist claimed that the rock of this region had been laid down a billion years or more ago, and that the toad must therefore be a billion years old or more. But the editor of the paper called the stonecutter a fool for not having caught the toad. A group of people, however, who had gone out to investigate found a toad not ten feet away from the cup-like depression, the stone-bubble, and there was no reason to think that this was any other but the long-lived toad, just out from a billion years of solitary confinement.

THE story, though old and often scorned, got about. The toad was exhibited in the village drugstore, where he contentedly accepted a tribute of live flies; and a reporter from a near-by town called to write up the tale and take pictures of the toad and the quarryman. And so the story came to New York. The Sunday rotogravure ran pictures of the event, and such was the interest stirred up that I was asked to collect opinions from the wiseacres of the Museum and the local colleges and scientific institutes.

Naturally I took advantage of this assignment to look up my old teacher, Crabshaw. We used to call him Fossil Crab's Paw. If you said it rapidly it sounded so much like Professor Crabshaw, that we dared to say it to his face, and being young and silly, we thought it a very brave and clever thing to do. I thought it would be good fun to see old Crabshaw again.

But it did not prove to be such fun, for the once so familiar biologic laboratory on the top floor made me melancholy. And the memory of many drowsy afternoons spent here, dissecting cockroaches

and rats, afflicted me.

The dissecting-room was empty, but there in the rear was old Professor Crabshaw's office. I could see him sitting at his desk, bent over a pile of examination papers. He was more seedy than ever and I swear he wore the same old acid-stained smock, even as his meek face bore the same old pale and drooping whiskers.

The honors and awards of being a scientist had passed over Professor Crabshaw and left him practically where he had started. He was still an instructor, overworked and poor. And yet he had done some fair work. He used to tell, with considerable pride, how his work on the surface-tension of various fluids taken from protozoa of different types had suggested to him the possibility of constructing a synthetic cell. This suggestion had been taken up by a later worker and carried to success, reaping fame and rich material rewards, but not for Crabshaw.

I introduced myself to the Professor and reminded him that I had once been a student in his class. He smiled and bade me be seated. That he was pleased to have a great newspaper ask him for his

opinion, was evident.

"Of course there's no truth in it. Just another popular fallacy like horsehair snakes. The toad no doubt lived near by. You say yourself that it differs not at all from the present species common to that region. That explains the whole story, which after all relies almost entirely on the say-so of the quarryman, who was probably frightened out of his wits, when a toad hopped past his chisel."

"May I quote you?" I asked.

It was in his answer to this that Professor Crabshaw revealed all the meekness of his nature, all the years in which the better diplomats in his science had advanced to more important posts, while he, the patient worker, had remained behind to correct examination papers.

"I'm afraid I can't permit that. may say—ah—that a professor at a local college-ah-a well-known biologist-of note-well, any sort of paraphrase." He smiled, pleased at his own flattery of himself, and content to visualize himself

praised, even anonymously.

S I left, I imagined him secretly hop-A ing I might forget his injunction and publish his name. But we published nothing, for it was decided to have a feature article on the subject in the Sunday magazine section. When the editor of the Sun-

day magazine told me this, I suggested Professor Crabshaw as a likely person to do the article. The moment I did so, I regretted it. No one could have been more unsuited to the task. But I consoled myself with the thought that he would surely refuse to write for a cheap paper.

But I was mistaken. He accepted, so I learned, and with great pleasure. Had he been seduced by the need of the two hundred dollars, which was the magazine's price for the article? I confess I was rather worried, for I felt myself respon-

sible for the whole business.

I therefore called him up on the telephone and began by explaining that it was I who had recommended him.

"I thought as much," he replied; "and you must have lunch with me. Can you meet me at the Faculty Club at once?" I accepted, thinking that my business

would be settled better across a table.

PROFESSOR Crabshaw was prompt to the appointment. With him was his wife, a buxom, frowsy person, whose not unkindly face showed plainly the effects of years of disappointed hopes.

She was voluble in her thanks to me. It was so kind of me to have recommended Paul! That it was the two hundred dollars that magnetized her was easy to guess. Her conversation at the luncheon

was of nothing but money.

"Look," she said, "there's Professor Slocum. Of course you've heard of him. Economics, you know. They say he's made a fortune in Wall Street. Those economists have secrets. You should see his new roadster.

"And that's Professor Dillinger, yes, the man with the little beard. He's rich. That's his wife there, the tall one with the permanent. He's got political connections. They say he's the brains for the

sugar lobby."

'Now, Lizzie—" Crabshaw objected. "But it's true. Just take a look at Professor Wailson. Just because he discovered that the mob reacts like a spoiled baby, he got himself a hundred-thousand-dollar-a-year job with an advertis-ing house... Oh, Paul, why haven't you ever discovered something brilliant like that? But of course, what can one do with protozoa? I always say there's no profit to be made out of raising such tiny bits of things."

"Well, I did once discover-" Crab-

shaw began meekly.

"Yes, Paul, we know all about that," his wife said severely.

"But, Lizzie, I was only going to explain to Mr.—"

"Paul, how often must I tell you to call me Elspeth? You know," she said, turning to me, "that I've always felt that if Paul would only get used to calling me Elspeth, instead of Lizzie, he'd make at least a thousand dollars more a year."

I saw that this conversation was becoming very painful to Crabshaw, so I began to question him about the article.

"What have you planned to say?"

"Well, I've begun with an examination of the much-disputed topic of what constitutes scientific evidence. Then taking up the story of the toad, I show that the proper evidence is lacking. And I conclude with a discussion of the life-habits of the toad and the experiments that have been made on prolonging the hibernation of various animals, demonstrating that they cannot survive much beyond their usual period."

"HIS was, of course, precisely what I had been afraid of: a rather dull,

scientific, educational tract.

"That's fine," I said. "Hm-but I'm just a little afraid it may not appeal to the reading public of our paper. Now, if you're seriously thinking of writing this sort of article, you'll have to come down a bit. Meet the public halfway. Its interest would be more aroused by a toad that had actually lived a billion years. Give the toad a chance to do his stuff."

"But toads don't live a billion years," Crabshaw exclaimed; "it's preposterous!"

"That's it!" I cried. "That's precisely it. The more preposterous, the better. You are a scientist, and you can give the preposterous that scientific veneer that will make it acceptable."

"But-" objected Crabshaw, his jaw hanging. His wife cut him short: course you can, Paul. Think of it: two hundred dollars every time you write an article! Why, that's almost a month's salary."

"Even more than that, Mrs. Crabshaw," I said, "if the articles should ever come into demand and editors compete for your husband's product."

Professor Crabshaw looked most woebegone, but we two had no pity on him. I saw that in gaining an ally in Mrs. Crabshaw I had the matter clinched. And indeed, the article turned out to be all that could be expected of the most experienced yellow journalist. We ran it under big headlines: "GREAT SCIENTIST CHAMPIONS BILLION-YEAR-OLD TOAD," by "Professor

Paul Crabshaw, internationally famous biologist." And we had enormous pictures of toads along with a strip of vignettes showing "our artist's conception of history and the toad," in which, above repeated pictures of the toad immured in his rock-prison, were depicted prehistoric animals, the glacial period, early apelike man, first signs of civilization in Egypt, then the Jews captive in Babylon, then Christ on the cross, and following that, Columbus in his caravel, Napoleon, and then the final picture typifying the most up-to-date scene: The President of the United States surrounded by a draped flag and a spread-eagle. In the article itself Professor Crabshaw adduced numerous reasons, all couched in the form of striking anecdotes, and designed to prove the possibility of a billion-year-old toad.

It really made great yellow journalism, but it made mighty poor science for a college professor, and the higher powers were

down upon him at once.

But that meant nothing to the editor of the Sunday magazine. A few weeks later, when passengers came home with a tale of having sighted a sea-serpent, that hoary legend was sent to Professor Paul Crabshaw for confirmation, and again he made good, no doubt goaded by Lizzie.

In a short time the articles of Crabshaw had become indispensable and were a regular feature for which we paid increasing prices. There followed articles on boys brought up by wolves, living in the forest and running on all fours, and articles on the plagues of Egypt and—well, that sort of thing.

OR several years this continued, during which Lizzie sure enough blossomed into Elspeth, with facials, permanents and better clothes to make her look the part. I used to meet them now and then for lunch at the Faculty Club, where Professor Crabshaw, at his wife's behest, still went, though he could feel that his colleagues had lost their respect for him.

"But I'm preparing my revenge," he confided to me one day. "I'm going to electrify the world. You just watch and see. I'm going to prove that marvelous things can and do happen. And that will be my vindication for that tripe on 'Was Jonah Swallowed by a Whale?' and 'What Will Man Look Like Fifty Thousand Years from Now?"

"Tell me more," I begged.

He shook his head. And Elspeth said: "He won't even show me what he's doing. But he's got himself a laboratory or some-



thing off in New Jersey and he goes there every day now."

One morning Crabshaw called me up and insisted that I must come up to see him at once, that he had something quite marvelous to show me. There was a note of exultation in his voice that made me drop my work and obey him.

When I arrived, he wrung my hand in his thin, nervous fingers, then skipping ahead of me like a French dancing-mas-

ter, he led me into his study.

"Now," he said, when I was seated, "my great day is at hand!" And with a smile that freed and relaxed all the long-frozen wrinkles of his face, he declared proudly:

"I was fired last night."

Seeing my look of astonishment, he continued: "No, not fired precisely, but given an ultimatum in something of this manner." Then old Crabshaw pulled in his little chin, tried to look cocky and arrogant and paunchy and said: "Here stood Prexy, just like this; he said: 'Mr. Crabshaw' (you see it was no longer Professor but just Mister), 'Mr. Crabshaw, I think the moment has come for you to

decide what subject you are most interested in, science or fiction-writing!'

"I answered him back hotly: 'Mr. President, you have no right to set a limit to scientific investigation.' And he answered: 'No, but we do try to keep our departments of science and of belles-let-

tres distinct.'

"Then I said: 'Mr. President, if you want to be shown that I am not romancing but have made one of the greatest contributions ever made to biology, I invite you over to my New Jersey laboratory tomorrow. You will see mythology come to life. I have invited several of my skeptical colleagues to come with me and if you wish to be fair to me, I shall have the honor of calling for you at three tomorrow!'

"He refused at first, but upon my insistence that I deserved a fair trial, he consented. It is past two now and we must leave soon. You will go along as a member of the press and you will write this up for your paper. So get out your pencil and make notes of what I'm going to tell you. This will be the biggest scoop of your life and will serve to repay you some for what you did for me."

"But—" I began.

"T ET'S not argue now," he said hastily. "We haven't the time. Listen carefully. I was going to make an article of this myself, but on second thought I decided that the first report ought to come from some one else. I would never be credited by serious readers: for it is more fantastic than anything I have ever written and yet every word of it is true.

"Let me begin at the beginning, how-You knew, did you not, that for some time I have been suffering under the slights of my fellow-scientists. I confess I did write many silly articles, but, if science would not butter my bread, then I had to do something else. So for a long time I have been scheming to rehabilitate myself. At first all I could do was hope and pray that something might happen that would, of itself, lift this reproach from me, some striking event that would, so to speak, give a little basis for my flights of fancy

"Then I myself began to cudgel my brains to scheme out something of my own. After several false attempts that I need not discuss here, I recalled something I had known for many years. And I wondered if there might not be a possibility for me in this bit of knowledge. Perhaps you can still recall from my

classroom lectures, the nature of the reptilian heart? Well, in brief, it is, compared to the mammalian heart, the human heart for example, an incomplete organ. In a way, it is a malformation. For it is so constructed that the blood-vessels of the animal are never filled with freshly oxygenated blood. The old stale blood, replete with body poisons, mixes in the chambers of the heart with the bright, clean blood from the lungs and is pumped back through the body again, only half cleansed.

"Scientifically, we express that by saying that the septum between the ventricles, the wall that should be there to keep the two blood streams separated, is incompletely formed. The animal thus suffers all its lifetime from auto-intoxication, and is by nature sluggish. Suffers is perhaps the wrong word, for its whole organism is evidently attuned to this subnormal state. The alligator, is then, to speak roughly, a life-long congenital cardiac, incapable of great activity except in infrequent spasms. His race is an invalid race, each member born an invalid and remaining an invalid throughout its ex-

"And does not the alligator give us an example of how the cardiac should live? No physician could prescribe anything finer for his patients than the alligator's calm, docile, peaceful, snoozy sort of life. Notice the alligators at the aquarium. They may look fierce, but they are condemned invalids and no matter how long they live, they will continue to practice extreme caution, sparing their poor circulatory systems, lying all day in bed, that is to say in the warm mud, and doing very little more than sending out an occasional blink of the eyelid.

WELL," Crabshaw went on before I could interrupt, "it occurred to me one day to see what would happen if that bad heart condition of the alligator were cleared up or at least improved by stretching that incomplete septum to form a dividing wall between the venous and the arterial blood streams. I immediately procured a lot of baby alligators and set to work to find out.

"My method was simple. I just chloroformed my patient and operated on him, following, as well as I could, the directions given in a textbook on surgery.

"My mortality rate was enormous. No doubt my surgical technique was atrocious. But then, I'm no surgeon and don't pretend to be one. It seemed that the heart condition only grew worse after the incomplete septum was stretched out. The poor alligators just turned up their pale and swollen bellies and gave up their alligatorish ghosts; many of them did not even bother to recover from the effects of the chloroform. I, myself, was frequently on the point of throwing up the sponge, when patient Number 87 gave me the courage to carry on. For several hours after the operation, that fellow ran about the room like a frisky puppy. I am sure that no one in the world has ever witnessed such speed and agility on the part of an alligator. I tell you, he ran about like a chipmunk, dived in and out of the water-tank, leaped, frolicked and dashed about in a reckless, gleeful manner that was a marvel and a delight to behold. Then suddenly, over he turned, wriggled his paws madly, like a toy train upset, the wheels of which continue to spin until the spring has unwound.

"Number 87 revived my courage. I determined to fight on and as I say, I gradually grew more skillful and altered my technique by constant improvements as I studied the matter. Finally, I determined to try somewhat larger specimens than those I had hitherto been working on and do more thorough and careful operations. Out of ten trials, I achieved two amazing successes. Whereupon I ceased to operate on further specimens and studied

those two. "I noted, in the first place that they devoured from four to eight times as much food as ordinary alligators of their age. But then they were never still for a moment, whereas their ailing brothers slept most of the day. Indeed, my two alligators grew so fast that I realized that something had to be done quickly or they would soon outgrow my little laboratory. At that time I worked in a store I had rented-a former sea-food shop,-in which the left-over equipment provided me with excellent facilities for the performance of my experiments. I say it behooved me now to hasten, lest I be caught in a jam, for at their rate of growth I realized that I would soon be unable to move them. Fortunately, I was able to locate and rent for a reasonable price, a former platinum refinery in New Jersey, a large single-story brick building, a shed rather, which was particularly suited to my purposes since the windows were all heavily barred with iron.

"I had some trouble crating and moving my pets. I had to creep up on the beasts and spray them with chloroform, and that was dangerous business, for I very nearly chloroformed myself. I should have had help, but I wanted no inkling of my work to reach the outside world. And those alligators were quick as birds and big too, as large I should say as young calves. They had grown to four times their original size in six days' time. And could they fight and squirm! . . .

"Well, anyway, that's all over and I now have my two pretty ones in their new home, which was at that time, comfortably arranged to house them. I say pretty ones, for they were sleek and shiny and the way they flirted their tails and skimmed along the floor with their paws moving so fast you could hardly see them, was a pleasure; and their eyes were never closed. . . . I had built a big tank for them and you should have seen them swim and dive and go leaping out of the water and come falling back with loud smacking splashes, like dolphins or seals. And taking such joy in life! wish I could show you that, but they have outgrown that tank now. I must build them a new one.

"I TELL you I used to watch them by the hour and say to myself, 'You're a public benefactor, you are. Here are the first two healthy alligators in the world! Why has man been so cruel as to reserve his medical knowledge so much for himself and his domestic animals? Wild life too, needs some attention.' You see, I hadn't then an inkling of what I had really succeeded in doing, but I was right nevertheless in one respect. I had given health to two alligators and I was the first privileged human being to observe what a healthy alligator was like.

"I noticed many peculiarities that set off my healthy two from the rest of the sickly breed of alligators. They began, for example, to show a better growth in the chest. They swelled out something like geckos. You know how geckos look, those small lizards. And with a better growth of the chest cavity went a differ-ent carriage of the head. The head rose from the ground—from which the ordinary alligator does not seem to have the strength to raise it—and was held up a bit, thus contriving to give the beasts the appearance of a neck. That bad posture that one notices in all alligators, crocodiles and gavials and related species, is plainly just another symptom of their congenital heart-trouble. They are all stricken down with severe auto-intoxication. It is to be noticed, by the way, that they all have a bad breath. My al-

ligators had a sweet breath.

"The next noteworthy change in outward appearance was the heavier growth of those spinal processes. In fact, in the common diseased alligator, there are no spinal processes to speak of, though along the tail are to be found some heavy skingrowths forming a serrated ridge and indicating perhaps what nature intended the beast to have there and which is actually to be seen on my two specimens, namely, ridges that are part of the spine and that reach luxurious proportions. The tail, too, grew larger and longer each day and there is nothing prettier to see than the way it curls and rolls in rich serpentine curves and even in complete You won't be able to see that now, because the quarters have become so cramped, but you will see how instead of terminating in a weak point, my healthy alligators have developed a flat arrowhead on the end, somewhat like the whale's tail, only sharper.

MIND you, those beasts of mine were now consuming each a good-sized sheep. And demanding more every day! And though big around as cows and of course, two or three times as long, they were still but tots, so to speak, being but a few months old and still in the process of development. Especially curious was the ridge that grew along the back, and which, between the shoulder-blades and the hips, if I may be permitted such loose anatomical designations, seemed to rise higher each day and to have greater internal structural support, for not only did the spine enter into its formation, but the ribs actually grew out of the body and provided buttresses for it. For some weeks my patients appeared as if a heavy mushroom-like parasol were sprouting out of their backs.

"'Now whatever can that be?' I used to wonder and continued to watch. But there were so many interesting things to see. I must explain that with my beasts the size of elephants, I ceased to be able to examine them very closely. I'll tell you the way I go about it: the factory is along a rarely used unsurfaced road in a remote part of the country, and I drive up there every day, formerly in an old used car, but now in a truck specially purchased, and loaded down with a couple of sheep or pigs fresh from the slaughterhouse and with several tubs of fish. Before I installed a differential pul-

ley, I had to drag all this up to the roof and dump the whole business through a ventilator on it. I don't dare enter the place. Why, it was even dangerous to do that much, for their lashing tails with that heavy and sharp arrowhead termination used to come whipping around and crash through the glass of the window or rather whatever fragments of glass remained in the window, and come out thumping and feeling around on the roof. I guess they were curious to find out what was all the disturbance up there. Or perhaps they knew it was feeding-time and they just wanted to show their appreciation of my solicitude. I often did think they felt gratitude for me, their deliverer from the oppression of heart-trouble.

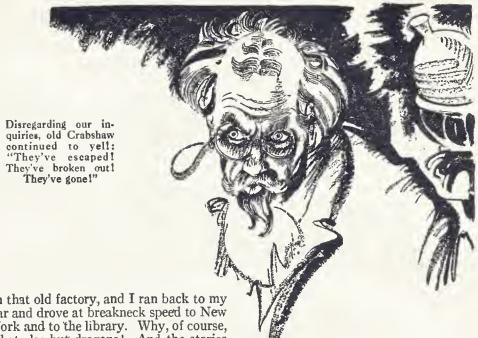
"Oh yes, I forgot to tell you how they began to show knobs on their snouts and how these knobs kept growing out and formed what I can only describe as feelers or whiskers, heavy things, flexible and curling like the trunk of an elephant, only thinner and covered with a leathery integument. Well, one of those feelers came whipping out of the ventilator one day and gave me a caress that tore through all my clothes and left a deep bloody scar. As I say, I suppose it was a caress, but I was so frightened that I jerked back. I believe that if it had been ill-meant I wouldn't be here to tell about it. Yes, I'm pretty nearly positive

of the fact that they like me.

"Of late it has grown more and more difficult to get a good glimpse of them. It's been getting more and more dangerous to go near that building and before I rigged up my rope system, I used to climb up to the roof by a ladder placed against the rear of the building where there aren't any windows, and once on the roof, I'd make sure that nothing was protruding from the ventilator and then I'd rush up and cast down my load and rush right back with another load. Once they were busy eating, it was fairly safe.

N OW and then I'd put my eye to a little opening I'd found and peer through. There were my beasts, growing larger every day, greater now than elephants in the bulk of their torso and with that parasol-like growth on their backs expanding and expanding, and shaping itself out into two vast ovals, one on each side. Then, one day, it came over me suddenly, what these were: wings! Yes, sir: wings!

"And suddenly, too, that day I realized what I possessed there, locked up



in that old factory, and I ran back to my car and drove at breakneck speed to New York and to the library. Why, of course, what else but dragons! And the stories and pictures of those fabulous beasts proved to me that my alligators were not the only healthy alligators that had ever existed. There had been at various times, but mostly in prehistoric days, other rare specimens of healthy alligators. How else explain the fact that people had seen precisely such monsters as I have out there, and preserved the record of their appearance in story and art? Why, those Chinese dragons you see embroidered in silk were as like mine as two peas. Undoubtedly there appears now and then, but exceedingly rarely, a sport or variant among the alligators or crocodiles, provided by chance with a healthy heart, and so free from autointoxication.

"But to get back to the progress of my pets. They continued to develop and pretty soon I began to see their wings unfold, with those enormous ribs of theirs strengthening them like ribbed Gothic vaulting. Hunched they are at the shoulders, and then smoothing down flat to the rear and wrapping against the lower body like enormous shields. You can see that they are aching, now, to try out the wings-but there is no room in the factory. But now and then they do a little tentative flapping, you know like chickens, and then they subside, sadly. I tell you it breaks my heart to see them so confined. But that will be remedied. Now they have begun to look awkward on the ground, trailing their immense wings, their size preventing them from frisking around as they used to do. They move back and forth like caged beasts and I can see that their tempers are getting short and ugly."

He paused suddenly and looked at his watch. "Come, we've no time to waste. I'm to call for the delegation at a quarter to three and then be at the President's house at three sharp."

"Say!" I exclaimed. "This is all so terribly exciting that my head is simply whirling. What a story this is going to make! We'll run a whole page of pictures!" I was so carried away by Crabshaw's vivid story that I never for a moment doubted its veracity.

"Pictures?" Crabshaw cried. "Pictures? Of course! Why did I never think of that? But I have been so feverishly excited. We must take some now. Wait, let me get our camera. Pshaw! I wish I had kept a photographic record of their development. Well, that will have to wait for the next group I operate on."

I suggested calling up for one of our news photographers, but he vetoed the idea. For the present, he wanted no outsider except me.

WE drove out in a limousine Crabshaw had hired for the occasion. There was a curious strained atmosphere among the occupants of the car. At first there had been solemn politeness, the stilted courtesy of duelists, which now

and then one of the former colleagues of Crabshaw would try to break by a weak attempt at humor. Crabshaw brushed these attempts aside and set the conversation on the recent spell of hot weather, or the latest political news, and in that fashion the conversation limped along until we had driven far out into New Jersey and had gone off the traveled highway and were bumping along a forest road much in need of repair.

The professors sat with their hats on their knees, the President wiped the copious sweat from his brow, and Crabshaw, thin and alert, kept leaning forward to

give the driver directions.

SUDDENLY Crabshaw gave a cry. The car drove out into an open space and stopped abruptly. Before us were the heaped ruins of what had once been a red brick building of some size.

Disregarding our solicitous inquiries, Crabshaw continued to yell: "They've escaped! They've broken out! They're gone!" We could not get any other in-

telligent statement from him.

He ran out and scrambled up over the masses of wreckage, the heaps of brick, the twisted girders and continued to let forth one piercing scream after another. We sat in the car for a while, overcome by a powerful stench that along with the heat of the day, robbed our lungs of the breath they craved.

The President, holding his kerchief to his nose, a gesture that his professional satellites imitated at once, made a muffled nasal remark: "Our friend has histrionic talents, too. Whew! If you agree with me, gentlemen, that we have seen enough, let us be off. I can't breathe

here."

"Nor I. . . . Nor I," said the obedient

professors.

But I followed Crabshaw up the heap of wreckage and looked down upon the interior of the building, where vast mounds of trampled filth lay so thick that it almost obscured the existence of a flat concrete floor beneath. And the odor was like that of the monkey-house at the zoo, only many times worse.

The President cried out: "Crabshaw, I insist upon being driven back to my residence at once. Otherwise I shall commandeer this car and leave you here."

Crabshaw, his eyes popping out of his head, his voice cracked with sobs, shouted back: "Come on up here, you fools! There's evidence left here, at any rate. Look at those foot-prints!"

Two of the professors, more curious and bolder than the rest, mounted to where we stood and looked down upon the scene below. But they had eyes only for the filth and not for its meaning or origin.

"The Augean stables had nothing on

this," one of them began.

"See those prints?" Crabshaw cried.
"I insist, Crabshaw," bellowed the President, whereupon one of the professors dutifully declared:

"I've seen enough," and the other

echoed that flat statement.

It made no difference to them how Crabshaw swore and begged and whined, with the tears flying from his eyes, his mouth sputtering: "Here you, Professor Albert, world-famous paleontologist, why don't you measure these foot-prints? What animal do they come from? Did you ever see such enormous holes as these claws have dug? And you, Professor Wiener! Why do you stand like dummies? Do you turn up your noses because the evidence is not a million years old? Why, if this were in the rocks of Montana, you'd be all over the ground, sniffing and measuring and preparing to write huge tomes. What's the matter with you now?"

Gently I led the hysterical man down from his mound of bricks and pulled him into the car. On the drive home he remained silent except for an occasional attempt to arouse the others with a sarcastic or pleading remark. To these the President answered once, without look-

ing at poor Crabshaw:

"I've never been so hoodwinked before . . . so grossly insulted!"

And the scientists repeated: "A plain

fraud!"

"A salted mine," said another, and one mentioned Cesnola and the fake antiquities he palmed off on the Metropolitan Museum, and another mentioned Glozel, and a third thought of the Louvre and the crown of Artaphernes, and then they reminded themselves of the Cardiff giant. . . .

In short, they passed in sarcastic review all the trickeries ever perpetrated

upon science.

BUT all things have an end; eventually we unloaded our cargo of scoffers and proceeded on to Crabshaw's apartment. The life had gone out of that man so that I could not desert him, but must see him safely home. As we rode on to his apartment, I heard newsboys crying

extras. Though the moment was hardly propitious, I felt that my profession demanded a copy. I stopped the car and called to one of the boys. No sooner had I spread out the sheet than I gave Crabshaw a mighty slap on the shoulder, for I confess that my own first emotion was one of exultation:

"Look, man! Read this!" I cried.

MONSTERS ATTACK ATLANTIC CITY
FOUR BATHING BEAUTIES AMONG MISSING
MANY SPECTATORS AT BATHING
BEAUTY CONTEST ARE SLAIN AND MANY
MAIMED BY FLYING MONSTERS

AS usual the actual news report was meager, for extras often have nothing more than a headline to sell. It is published while the reporters hustle out to secure completer information. The body of the article repeated in various

forms the following story:

"Conflicting reports by telephone from Atlantic City tell of enormous flying monsters, birds or airplanes (eyewitnesses are not in agreement on this point), attacking the crowd assembled to watch the final awards in the nation-wide competition for the nomination of Miss America. Two or more scarlet-colored birds of vast size swooped down on the panic-stricken multitude, who dashed for cover in all directions. One informant declares he was reminded of the airplane attacks on infantry that were a feature of the World War.

"Whatever they were, beast or machine, they mutilated dozens of bystanders—and were gone. Their appearance and disappearance were so rapid, their speed was so enormous, that no one seems to have retained a clear notion as to precisely what happened. The monsters seem to have swooped down out of the clouds and back again, carrying off some of their victims and leaving the boardwalk strewn with the dead and the

dying.

"The earliest reports from the hastily organized volunteer ambulance and medical corps—" And so on.

I grew more and more serious as I read of the victims. But Crabshaw only expanded. He slapped his knee:

"Ha, ha! Those healthy youngsters! What an appetite! Think of that. Just swooped down from the clouds,"—he illustrated the maneuver with a swoop of his hand,—"snatched up those beauties and climbed right back out of human sight. Wow! Think of it, man!" And he gave me a jovial dig in the ribs.

"I'm thinking of it, all right," I said soberly.

But he was so delighted that he actually began to caper around in the car. It was droll, but I could not laugh. I thought of the dead and dying out there on the boardwalk and the four young girls who had come to exhibit their youth and beauty and who had been snatched up beyond the clouds and devoured.

up beyond the clouds and devoured.

"Stop! Stop the car!" Crabshaw shouted. "We must get dozens of those papers and clip out those articles and send them to those benighted professorial asses who came out there and refused to

use their five senses."

"Do nothing of the kind!" I cried and pulled Crabshaw back to his seat. "Listen, to me, you fool. Do you want the whole world on your neck? Don't you realize what your dragons have done? They've killed, or injured for life, scores of people. What will the world say of Professor Crabshaw when it learns that his petty desire for vindication in the eyes of his colleagues has caused wholesale murder? Take my advice and keep quiet about this and pray that it may blow over. Or enjoy your bloody triumph if you like, but beware of proclaiming it. As far as I am concerned, not a word of your connection with this gruesome business at Atlantic City will get into the newspapers."

THAT sobered him. But only for a moment; then he wagged his head, tickled silly by the accomplishment of his pets: "Husky youngsters!" he muttered over and over again to himself. Then he exclaimed out loud: "Husky youngsters! Gad! What will they do when they are full-grown, can you imagine? Why, they're only kids now. They're not a year old yet. And just out of the hospital, so to speak. Why, come to think of it, this is the first day they flew. Say, what do you suppose they'll do when they are as big as battleships? Bigger, maybe. Wow!"

And he went on ruminating gleefully: "Flying so perfectly on their first essay! Where is the human aviator who could equal that! And say! By gosh, I never thought of that. Do you recall all the stories of the dragons demanding a tribute of fair maidens? Well, there you see it. First thing they do is go after the beautiful virgins. Ha-ha! Just another proof for you that those old artists and poets were not just imbeciles, but as good scientific observers as any of us mod-



"Never thought of it!" he shouted. "Never once occurred to me. Oh, this is rich! Just too perfect! Male and female created he them. Yes sir! One male and one female. Think of it, man. Think of the race that will come from those beasts! Why—why, it—" He stood there with an ecstatic smile on his

uplifted face. It was as if he felt himself akin to the Creator and was calling down a blessing upon the Adam and Eve of the new race of dragons.

It occurred to me later, where I had heard people talk just like Crabshaw during that ride home. Parents, hardworking parents of the poorer classes,



who raise up their children to take the place in the world that they, the parents, would have liked to occupy, they speak thus. And for Crabshaw, his dragons, so strong, so unassailable, were his sons who were going to wipe out with their strength all the disappointments that he had been forced to swallow.

No sooner had we alighted and dismissed the car than he declared: "I'm not going upstairs. Please, do me a favor: go up and tell Elspeth not to expect me until late. Say nothing about the dragons, of course."

"And what are you going to do?" I asked, displeased at his request.

"I've got something I must take care of," he said mysteriously. And then, sensing that I was about to object, he pleaded quickly: "Go, please! Good Lord, am I to be balked all my life?"

I realized vaguely what he wanted to do, but his last words made me give in to his plea. And then what good would it have done to have refused him? He would have put through his plan anyhow. The manner in which he clutched his camera under his arm and the light of fanatic determination in his eyes, were indicative of a firm resolve: to go back to the ruined factory in New Jersey, no doubt driving there in his own little car, in the hope that the darling alligators whom he had nursed to health from their original heart-trouble, would return to roost there and he would be thus enabled to secure photographs of them.

I let him go and regretted it; but I hold myself blameless, for short of locking him up behind iron bars, nothing could have restrained him. I went up and made some excuse to Elspeth and then left to catch up on my neglected work. Of the unsuccessful dragon expedition, I said nothing to anyone. To have done so would have been to expose Crabshaw. I was rather surprised to find that the professors at the University suspected nothing of his connection with the disaster at Atlantic City, but on second thought, this was only natural: such a connection must have appeared extremely far-fetched and to have propounded it would have been to expose one's self to ridicule if it were proved false and again to ridicule, were it proved true. In any case, the great publicity would have been Crabshaw's. Such must have been the motives of the professors in keeping quiet, if indeed they had any thoughts on the matter at all. Afterwards, true enough, all sorts of crazy things were propounded, by professor and layman alike and Crabshaw's name was mentioned, but those who had been in a position to assure themselves of the justice of Crabshaw's claims and had neglected to do so, had nothing to gain by speaking up; on the contrary—

WHEN I called up Crabshaw on the afternoon of the following day, Elspeth answered, extremely agitated.

"What do you know about this?" she

asked. "Where is Paul?"

"Why? Didn't he come home?" I asked, my heart sinking at the thought of Crabshaw alone with the dragons.

"No, he didn't come home," she answered. "But that's not what puzzles me so much as where he has been. I'm afraid that there's some sort of hoax afoot. Since yesterday I have had three cablegrams, ostensibly from him, all sent collect."

"Cablegrams?"

"Yes. One from London that came last night. The second one came early this morning and was from Alexandria. And I just had another, just this moment. From Singapore, Malay States."

"Well, what's he say?" "He says the same thing in each one:

DON'T WORRY STOP AM SAFE STOP BE HOME SOON."

"Well, that sounds encouraging," I said, for want of any better comment.

Elspeth, however, declared: "Well, I can tell you this: I don't believe they come from Paul. He can't be all over the world in one night. And I'm not going to pay for any more of them! Perhaps you can tell me what it's all about. What did you two do yesterday?"

"Why, nothing," I said and blandly made whatever excuses I could think of quickly and then hung up. Actually, of course, I had a good notion of what had happened. It was plain that he was riding through the clouds on the back of one or the other of his flying alligators, and could stop them where he pleased. Flying from continent to continent, and over the oceans. . . . Well, glory be to you, Paul! Now you are truly vindicated. Now you have your apotheosis. All the world will bow to you when you come alighting in the middle of Broadway on your pet dragon!

THOUGHT for a moment of prol claiming the arrival of Paul Crabshaw from a round-the-world hop done in one day. But fortunately I thought better of it—in view of the recent disaster at Atlantic City, of which the papers were now full. But I could not restrain my mind from waxing enthusiastic over the fact that it was plain that Paul had tamed the monsters. What would not mankind be able to do with these domesticated dragons, who were so superior to airplanes? Perhaps Paul had struck the right tack, the new road, along which mankind was to progress by breeding or otherwise developing animals to do the work of machines.

But we waited in vain for Paul Crabshaw to return. Elspeth paid for several

more cablegrams from South America, from Africa and from other outlandish Then the cablegrams ceased, which both pleased and disappointed the economical Elspeth. And after that we

never heard of Paul again. . . .

As for the rest, it is history. The bruit of the Atlantic City disaster died down and for several years we heard nothing more of monsters. Elspeth, bereaved, had gone away to nurse her sorrow and Paul Crabshaw's disappearance was soon forgotten. I used to ponder over the probable fate of the dragons. Evidently their mighty hearts had given way and they had fallen into the sea along with their doctor.

BUT they had only retired to remote regions, there to breed thousands of their kind. For soon the world awoke to the fact that it was positively infested with dragons. There were at first, rumors of dragons devouring the negroes of interior Africa. That was presumed to be false, like so many other jungle stories. And then there were rumors of dragons in South America and China. These were dismissed as tropically over-heated imaginations and mere Chinese fantasies. And then there were dragons in Europe, in France, in England, in the United States, right here in New York—and no one could doubt the truth of it any more. The world was a prey to maneating dragons!

Too late then to fight the vermin that had obtained such a foothold in our world. Alas—no longer our world, but the world of the dragons who have become supreme! Step by step, we have retreated and given up the globe which we had brought so near to complete civilization, given it up to our successors in time. The human history of the earth

is closing its books.

Too late then for me to tell what I knew, and when I did, I found no one to believe me. No one would try my simple explanation and see if alligators could really be cured of their hearttrouble and become dragons. The mere suggestion was dismissed at once on the grounds that acquired characteristics were not inherited, whereas these dragons bred true. In short, the idea was too ridiculous to be discussed seriously. The explanation that science handed down was that some dragon-eggs, remaining for millions of years in the cold storage of the Arctic, had by chance been caught in the sweep of the glacier, had been carried down in the slow glacial movement to the sea, had thence, along with an iceberg, been carried off to sea and had floated down into the warmth of the tropics. On some tropical island shore the dragon-eggs, still by miracle unbroken and unspoiled, had slowly been brooded to life by the warmth of the sun. This theory fitted in well with old tales of gigantic roc-eggs and was generally accepted by science and laity alike.

I did not press my point, for what could be the value, at this late date, of knowing how to transform a comparatively harmless alligator into a dragon? Making more dragons, even in the name of research, was the silliest ever of all schemes to carry coals to Newcastle. Why, the world was full of them! Not a city, not a village, not the remotest hamlet but suffered its depredations. The dread fowl came down like a hawk upon chickens and carried off men, women and children, as well as cattle, and left only its horrid droppings as a final

insult to the tragic survivors.

In vain mankind prayed. In vain ministers sermonized on the Beast of the Apocalypse, the beast whose number was 666. In vain we turned to anti-aircraft guns, to explosive bullets, to poison gases, to gigantic traps. In vain, our most courageous aviators mounted the skies in pursuit of them. A thrash of their tails and man and his machine tumbled to the earth, while his bullets rattled harmlessly off the armor-like . hide of the beast. It was useless to fight. We were beaten. And the wise ones were those who scurried off soonest to the best caves and mines. Farmers burrowed underground and tilled their fields in the darkest nights and did not trouble themselves to grow any more food than they could use. Famine added itself to the miseries of mankind. Our supply of coal Our electric power-houses ceased to function. Turbines still ran while there were volunteers to brave the danger of running them and of repairing the power lines. As long as our machines still held together they were used, but repairs grew more and more impossible. To work in the daylight was suicidal. At night, light was forbidden, for it immediately attracted a dragon out of the sky.

VIDENTLY they bred rapidly. Not a twenty years after Crabshaw's first specimen, thousands were counted. And the world of human life perished before

their insatiable hunger, as once the world of animal life had perished before our advance. What we had done to buffalo and passenger-pigeon was repaid by us in full measure.

Oh, where is now the Saint George that is to rid us of our scourge? Where the scientist with serum or inoculation that should wipe out these dragons? What? Will science fail us? Are we doomed, we, the last remnants of the human race who now exist in perpetual fear? At first how many and how bright were the reports of what we would do to the dragons: Reports of new types of Of great steel spring-nets. Of new and most potent gases, harmless to man but deadly to the great saurians. Of disease germs that were to be spread among them and wipe them out in one vast epidemic. Of poisoned bait. . . . Alas, all, all failed! Until even the most optimistic of us have lost heart. . . .

We ceased to hope and made the best of things, and quietly blessed those valiant old New Yorkers who had constructed that so often ridiculed megalopolis with its impregnable fortress of skyscrapers and its marvelous network of underground passageways where we, besieged mankind, can make our last stand. Here we are safe for a time. That is to say, until famine gets us. We stave off that as best we can by utilizing every roof-top and planting countless windowboxes and developing whatever mushroom and other fungus growths will thrive in the dark. Here and there too, we grow food under ultra-violet light, but current is almost priceless. How long can we last, seeing that our existence is ultimately dependent on the constant excursions of volunteer corps who are ever risking their lives for the community? Our numbers grow daily less. A few, we are told by rare travelers, survive in the far north where dragons rarely go. A few survive in scattered mines. No doubt there must be other communities, say in London, and Berlin and other places where there are extensive subways, but it is years since we have had any communication with them.

What is to be the end of all this, I ask myself. Are we to perish utterly? I think I shall cause this tale to be engraved on stone so that if ever the human race arise again, it may read and know how the damnable inferiority complex of one Paul Crabshaw made all mankind the prey of fabulous monsters.

THE END

The Radio Patrol

A stirring drama of metropolitan police work.

By JAMES PER-

"HERE'S a Chinaman carrying a little white girl down our block. She's fighting back and crying. He's kidnaping her. I'm sure he is. It's another Lindbergh or McMath case. Why don't the police do something?"

A woman's voice shrilled over the wires leading to the emergency switchboard in New York's police headquarters. Thousands of such messages were received daily. They had grown since the city had begun to advertise its need of citizens' help in the unending war on crime.

"If you don't stop this kidnaping," the voice went on, "it'll get to where there won't be any children here. We mothers won't live in the city."

Short, pointed questions brought out the woman's name, address and telephone-number.

"Thank you, madam," Operator Harry Cassidy concluded, when he had filled out the blank report form. "We'll get right after this."

He left his chair to take the information into an adjoining room, a vast circular apartment in the center of which was a horseshoe-shaped table covered with small brass disks. Upon each of these was a number printed in black. Beneath the table's glass top was a de-tailed street-map of New York City. The disks represented radio patrol-cars. They varied in size and shape, but the majority were flat and round, indicating small runabouts patrolling districts of a trifle more than one square mile. Others were larger and represented riot- and emergency-squads, whose machines were armed with shotguns, automatic rifles and tear-gas bombs.

On the other side of the room was a large metallic cabinet through whose screened openings came rays of dull saffron, blue and reddish purple, thrown



LEY HUGHES

off by radio-tubes kept warm for immediate use.

Harry Cassidy paused before the horseshoe table and watched the young man seated in its center. He was making odd patterns by moving his brazen pawns across squares formed by lengths of colored yarns. He grouped them into various complicated arrangements, then carefully restored each to its former position.

"How's the grand old game of solitary chess, Joe?" Harry Cassidy asked, as he laid down the report he had just taken.

Joe Halpin looked up, his Irish blue eyes smiling. "I was just trying to figure out something," he muttered.

ure out something," he muttered.

"Here's one to figure," Cassidy gestured at the report. "It may be a live one."

"They all might be—something," Joe answered, "but most of them aren't."

He glanced at the report and then at the table which all but surrounded him. It was more than thirty feet from end to end. His pencil pointed to the street address opposite the woman's name.

"I'll get right after this," he told Cassidy. "These kid cases can't wait. You can't tell when they're dynamite."

He reached out to take up a small microphone stand and placed it before him. Next he snapped a black lever. A high buzzing note sounded through the room, a note that went out over the air to be reproduced in each of two hundred and sixty-two patrol cars. The lights in the broadcasting cabinet burned brighter as the *alerte* of the radio patrol was sent pulsing through space.

Cutting off that warning note, Joe Halpin turned toward the microphone. "Car Three-Seventeen. . . . Car Three-Seventeen," he said in a level, resonant voice. "Signal Thirty-two: A Chinese has

just gone down Twenty-third Street between Ninth and Tenth avenues, carrying a screaming white child. Signal Thirty-two. Signal Thirty-one, if necessary."

"Signal Thirty-two" was radio code for "go immediately to the following address and investigate, reporting the result by telephone to this station." Its companion number, "Signal Thirty-one," informed the radio patrol that it should arrest on charges of felony if any real suspicion of kidnaping were found.

His message broadcast, Joe Halpin snapped a lever that ended the humming within the big metal cabinet, and the colored lights lowered. Next he took up the small brass disk representing Car No. 317 and turned it over. This exposed white numerals instead of black, and showed that Car No. 317 had been detached from its patrol and sent upon a mission. A move had been made in the unending game Joe Halpin was playing.

It was hot beneath the glass roof of the broadcasting room, hot and drowsy. Summer was coming, and the soft air was slumberous. A telephone report came in telling that the radio equipment in car No. 126 had broken down. Joe Halpin picked up a hexagonal disk that represented a radio-repair machine and transferred it from a square in lower Manhattan into Greenwich Village, where No. 126 was operating. At the same time he switched on the current.

time he switched on the current.

"Repair crew R12," he said, speaking into the microphone, "go to Greenwich Avenue and Seventh—No. 126 will contact you there."

tact you there."

He placed a ring about Disk No. 126. It told him the car would be deaf until he received advice over the telephone that repairs had been made. He hoped nothing of importance would happen in the Village until the car was repaired.

A SUMMER sun beat down, making the room like a Turkish bath. Joe Halpin nodded a trifle, then snapped himself into upright position. He turned his attention to his practice of concentrating cars in various parts of the city, visualizing raids, disasters and mutinous riots. A mad game, that solitary chess, but anything might happen, any time.

Reports of stolen cars came in. Their description and license-plate numbers went into the air, to be gathered by constantly patrolling cars. In an adjoining room teletype machines pounded out the same information. Ten thousand pairs



of eyes would be looking for those automobiles within a few minutes.

"Not so hot today," Cassidy said, laying another report on Halpin's desk. "Plenty in here." Joe mopped his

brow.

"I mean the old chess-game. It's-" He stopped as a yell sounded from the emergency switchboard he had just left. Next a man in the uniform of a captain hurried into the broadcasting-room. On his coat-lapels were the crossed flags and lightning-burst of the police signal-corps.

TOE HALPIN cut in the high shrill of the alert signal as he saw his commanding officer dashing toward him. It was throbbing through the air before the Captain had reached his desk.

"Here's a chance to do your stuff, Joe," Captain Michael McNab snapped. "They've just touched off the 130th Street branch of the Wardwall Trust & Savings. Looks like the Codera mob.

There's the dope."

Halpin left down the emergency signal while he scanned the card McNab had given him. The pulsing summons was sounding in every one of two hundred and sixty-two patrol cars. Often during the long, lazy hours on duty, Joe had visioned a situation such as he now faced. He had discussed hypothetical robberies with Captain McNab. They had argued tactics with other radio operators, debating dispositions and strategy like members of a war-college playing Kriegspiel with wooden ships and tin soldiers.

"Four in the gang—black limousine— 3Y-35-248," McNab was reading the card again. "Started north on Amsterdam."

"Right," Joe Halpin said. He cut in the microphone, and the colored lights brightened again. Then he began speaking in level, unexcited voice, enunciating each syllable carefully. No use to sound the dramatic call, "All cars -attention-calling-all cars," like a scene on the talking screen. The shrill sound of the alert signal had been going

long enough to attract the notice of every

patrol-car in the city.

"Signal Thirty," he began, his pencil pointing to the black numbered disks surrounding a focal point at 130th Street and Eighth avenue.

"Signal Thirty." For the radio police, this was a call to arms. Translated into everyday words, it meant: "A serious crime has been committed. Vigorous and prompt action must be taken.

Halpin took a black button from his vest pocket and placed it on the map at Amsterdam Avenue. It represented the

bandit car.

"Bank robbers fleeing from Wardwall Trust, One Hundred and Thirtieth Street," Halpin went on, "Black limousine-3Y-35-248. Going north on Amsterdam. Believed to be Codera mob. Signal Thirty—Signal Thirty-one."

Another code phrase. The patrol cars were ordered to arrest the fleeing bandits on charges of felony and use their guns

to effect capture.

Next Joe began moving his disks with swift, sure movements. In the long quiet hours he had rehearsed similar dispositions. It was part of his game of solitary chess. He had visioned crimes like this in various sectors of the city, stretching from Staten Island to the Bronx. Like a general who has calculated every probable and possible movement of his adversary, Halpin had reasoned out the steps bandits might take in virtually every neighborhood where banks or their branches were established.

The brass checks began to assume a circular pattern. Meantime his calls sounded through the ether, each summons marking the transposition of a

numbered disk.

"Car No. 216, block Eighth Avenue at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. Move north," he ordered. "No. 211 come south on Eighth until you meet

More shifting of pieces. Patrols on the Manhattan side of the Harlem River were converging. From the Bronx came others. These were ordered to take positions that would block the bridges at Willis Avenue, Lenox, 155th and 181st Streets.

With more than a score of roadsters rushing toward the scene, Halpin started several large and heavily armed automobiles sweeping north from midtown or racing south and west from the Bronx. In them were detectives armed with automatic rifles, shotguns and gas bombs.

Less than two minutes were required to get all into action. Then he called on reserves from greater distances. streets surrounding the ravished bank would teem with blue-green cars before the bandits had gone far.

Meantime teletype machines were buzzing. Street call boxes in precincts surrounding the scene of the crime were flashing their orange lights to attract the attention of patrolmen on the beats.

"They'll be switching cars before long," Joe Halpin mumbled, staring at the black button. He moved it up Amsterdam Avenue to indicate its progress.

"This is like one of those World Series

boards," he heard a voice say.

Joe looked up to see a ring of eager faces around the table. Men not on duty at the switchboards or teletype machines were watching him with sharpened interest. Halpin was moving pawns of brass, but out in the city, living men with revolvers in their hands were rushing through teeming traffic in answer to his signals. The black button was a harmless thing, but it represented a speeding limousine filled with desperate gangsters, ready to shoot it out with any force before they surrendered their loot.

Halpin stared at the button again. Then he shouted to Harry Cassidy.

"Give me a flash on the first car stolen north of Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street," he ordered.

The man nodded and hurried back to the emergency switchboard. A moment

later he returned on the run.

"Here you are, Joe. Some service!" Halpin glanced at the description of the missing vehicle and shook his head.

"Codera and his mob, or any of those other gangs, wouldn't take a truck," he complained. "They'll want something fast, and a closed job." Then raising his voice so Cassidy might hear: "Tell Murph to switch all of those calls in to me."

"O. K."

Lights twinkled on the emergency switchboard. Reports of the man-hunt were beginning to come in. A black limousine bearing the plates 3Y-35-248 had been sighted by a patrolman. It was coursing up Broadway at high speed. Joe Halpin changed the position of the button on his board and then began to rearrange his small brass disks. Once more the shrill alert signal cut through the air.

"No. 324 start down Broadway," Joe ordered, "No. 452 move north from



Hundred and Twenty-fifth. Bridge patrols hold fast. Double guard on Lenox Avenue bridge."

Next the speeding riot and emergency squad cars were shifted in their courses. Upper Broadway would be the scene of battle.

A pause as Joe studied his tactical dispositions: then he glanced up to see Harry Cassidy edging toward him.

"Fat chance of getting those birds with them listening in on every word you say,' the telephone operator muttered. "Mobs like that carry their own short-wave sets just to keep track of what you're doing. They're tuned in on you right this min-

"They're not tuned in on this," Joe pointed to his own head and grinned. "Those babies are all fussed up, and their trigger-fingers are itching. Mine aren't."

A buzz from the telephone before him. The emergency switchboard had plugged through a call from the man-hunt.

WE'VE got 'em surrounded, sir," a voice came over the wire. "They've stopped the black limousine on St. Nicholas Avenue and-"

"Did you see them?" Halpin broke in.

"No, but—"

"Hang up and call back when you do," snapped Joe. Then in a voice that reached the emergency board: "Give me the first stolen car from—"

"There's one on the line now," a voice

answered. "Here it is."

Halpin raised the instrument to his ear. "Say, police—some boids just stole my almost brand-new Lincard," a foreign accent complained. "I seed them with it on St. Nicholas."

"How many-four?"

"How did you know dot?"

"What's your car number?" Joe asked. "8Z-98-70 und I zhust haf made vun payment, und-"

"What's the color?"

"Vell, dot new blue dot-"

"Type?"

"Please, Mister, I don't know noddings about types. I'm in vimmin's und misses' vear, not a printer, und-"

"Is it a closed or open car?" Halpin's voice displayed neither irritation nor

haste.

"Closed, but the lock von't vork," the man replied. "But if I get it pack-"

"You will," Joe broke in, "but I can't promise what kind of condition it'll be

in. Thanks. Good-by."

As he replaced the telephone, he flipped on the alert call once more. He let it shrill through the air for several seconds as he rearranged his disks. His eyes narrowed, and he bent over the board with its bright brass pawns. It was no longer a game of solitaire. He had an adversary whose face he could not see, but he knew the features were dark and sinister. The pawns were circling a bandit king. He had scored the first "check." If he played the game, a "mate" would follow quickly.

"Signal Thirty," he began again. "Disregard black limousine—3Y-35-248. It's been found—abandoned. Signal Thirtyone. Lincard sedan—8Z-98-70—Eleanor blue—same passengers—same driver. Car 324—get the first two trucks you can nab, and block St. Nicholas Avenue. Nos. 452 and 453, do the same to Broadway and Lenox. Squad cars back up truck barricades with bombs ready."

The circle around the table was tightening. Then a hurried whisper ran around it. The men turned toward the door.

"The Commissioner."

A heavy man with gray hair and commanding air was entering the broadcasting room. Captain McNab hurried to meet him.

"What are you doing about that bank stick-up, Mike?" the police chief asked, as the head of the signal-corps joined him.

"Everything we can, Commissioner."
"That won't be half enough, if they make a get-away," was the throaty reply. "What's this gang doing in here?"

"Watching the man-hunt, sir," McNab answered. "Step over and listen to what this lad's doing. It don't sound like the days when you and me used to pound our beats, but—he's sure running that Codera gang ragged."

THE circle of men parted to permit the Commissioner to reach the board where Halpin was working. Joe did not look up. He had transferred the black button to St. Nicholas Avenue and was

studying his freshly arranged pattern of brazen disks. Then his desk phone buzzed once more.

"That car is coming down Edgecombe Road," a patrolman announced. "I got a flash of it. They're the gang, all right. Soapy Jim Baraca is driving, but—"

His voice snapped off as Halpin broke the connection. At the same time the aërial siren sounded a fresh alerte.

"Cars 452 and 453," he began, again transferring the button and the brass pawns as he called their numbers. "Move with trucks to Edgecombe—155th Street. Don't block the road until you see Lincard sedan 8Z-98-70 coming. Car 324take your trucks and come down Edgecombe from 168th. Squad cars follow. Get your guns out."

A GLANCE passed between the Commissioner and Captain McNab. They said nothing. Joe Halpin, like the marines, had the situation well in hand. Radio was new to his chiefs, but they were good enough policemen to know that the quiet-spoken young man before them was spreading a net that would have man-killing sharks in it before long.

"Aren't they liable to dodge down a side street when they hear you talking about trucks?" Harry Cassidy leaned

forward to whisper.

"They won't hear it," Halpin answered. "I'm betting they didn't transfer their radio when they switched cars. And-"

He paused as the telephone buzzed

importunately.

"Squad Car 1132 has sighted them. They're both shooting," an excited voice shouted over the wire. "They went by here like bats out of hell."

"Where's here?"

"Hundred Sixty-third."

"Thanks."

Joe Halpin worked with swift dexterity. The high buzz of the radio alarm sounded, and again he changed his disks. The tense men about the board saw the dark button advance down Edgecombe Road. The ring of brazen pawns tightened around it. Next Halpin was speakinto the microphone.

"Squad Car 1132—stop shooting—drop back, and—"

"Hey, Joe," Captain McNab started to shout. "Don't-"

"Just a minute, Mike," the Commissioner had gripped the Captain by the arm. "That lad knows what he's doing. We've got too many names on the roll of heroic dead right now."

"But Commissioner, they'll--"

"Listen."

"Squad Car 1132 drop back, but keep contact." Joe Halpin's voice was as undisturbed as though he were ordering a patrol runabout to investigate a report of a broken fire hydrant. "Cars 452 and 453—get your trucks ready. That Lincard is coming right for you. Nos. 324, 216 and 118, move toward Edgecombe Road and 155th Street. All others stand by for flash orders."

The men around the table tensed as silence followed. They watched Joe Halpin leisurely transfer his pawns to new positions. He took a couple of coins from his pocket to mark the trucks that would be thrown across Edgecombe Road at 155th Street, and then paused, surveying his arrangement with a smile of ap-

proval.

"If this don't get them," Captain McNab said in a throaty whisper, "we'll have every newspaper in town riding our necks."

"And if it does,"—the Commissioner spoke from experience—"we'll be only doing what we're supposed to, and that will be that."

Another interval of even more tense

quiet.

"Gees—I wish something would happen." Harry Cassidy had all but climbed upon the table.

Joe Halpin took a cigarette from his pocket and lighted it, carefully extin-

guishing the match.

The seconds lengthened, and the men shuffled their feet in restless anxiety. Each had a vision of the bandit car raging down Edgecombe Road. They saw Squad Car 1132 in pursuit, firing as it thundered after the robbers. Next it dropped back, obeying an order that came out of the air.

NOW, they knew, the gangsters were speeding toward 155th Street. Would the trucks arrive in time? Had patrol cars 452 and 453 been able to commandeer trucks? Each moment seemed ages long.

"Wonder what's the matter," Harry

Cassidy growled.

Another glance between McNab and

the Commissioner.

"They may have turned up a crossstreet or hit the grit," the Captain suggested, "Then again, they might—" "S-s-s-h-h-h-!"

Joe Halpin's phone was buzzing again. He answered it in unhurried voice. He reached for a blank report-form and jotted down a few words. Then he flipped down the alert lever once more. As the call sounded through the air, he began to distribute the brass disks upon the board.

"All cars resume their usual patrols," he began in casual tone, "all except 452 and 453. Four fifty-two will take the recaptured money and return it to the 130th Street branch of the Wardwall Trust & Savings. Don't forget to get a receipt. Car 453 will await the coming of the coroner's deputy and give necessary orders for clearance of all débris and wreckage. That's all. Resume regular routine."

HE cut off the buzzing drone of the great tubes on the other side of the room, and the colored lights dimmed quickly. He looked up to see the Commissioner staring down at him.

"What happened?" the police com-

mander inquired.

"They crashed into a truck-load of sand, sir," Joe Halpin answered. "Of course it busted that Lincard and dented up the truck, but—"

"I guess the bank insurance company will be glad to pay for that," was the crisp interruption. "And—if there is any reward, I know who's entitled to it."

Joe Halpin flushed, and returned to rearranging his brazen disks. The crowd around the table melted, although the buzz of excited words did not die for several minutes. Gradually the lethargy of the early summer afternoon returned. Joe Halpin dozed, then snapped himself to attention. More calls came in, telling of fresh trivialities, but the pawns upon the board were shifted but little. . . .

"Say, Harry," Joe asked Cassidy, as the end of his shift neared, "did you get anything on that Chinaman with a white child? That looked like a live-

wire case."

A grin crossed the telephone operator's

face.

"Just another washout," he answered, "Hong Kee is cook for a family in London Terrace, and he was sent out with little Princess Charming so she could get an airing. She didn't want to go home for her afternoon nap, but Hong made her."

"Oh."

Joe Halpin yawned. Then he went back to playing his imaginary game upon the gigantic chess-board. It might come in handy—some day.

Murder Island

A Caribbean hurricane forces a tremendous climax in this fine novel of air adventure... The author is himself a pilot, with army, mail, passenger and hurricane flying experience to guide him.

By LELAND JAMIESON

The Story Thus Far:

AN GREGORY, a MYCABA pilot just arrived from Merida, found the reporters waiting about the Miami office in great excitement: Helen Sayles, an English sportswoman, had taken off from Havana many hours before, and had failed to arrive.

A publicity stunt, most probably, Gregory told his friend the reporter Lin Jackson. But a little later, in the office of the dispatcher Melvin, a fateful message

came in:

CQ CQ CQ HS HS HS LANDING ON ISLAND POSITION UNKNOWN TAKE BEARING DETAILS LATER SOS SOS SOS HS HS HS ATTACKED—BY P—

And that was all. They checked and rechecked with the Kingston and other operators the bearings of the position whence that strange message came. All agreed that there was no land there nearer than Andros Island, seventy miles away. . . . So it happened that Dan Gregory, with Melvin as co-pilot, and accompanied by the mechanic McKinnon and the newspaper man Jackson, set out in a big flying-boat next day to ferret out the mystery.

For the operations manager Dunbar, who sent them, knew that many other strange things had happened of late that needed explaining: other planes had disappeared in this region; and a group of powerful and much-wanted criminals had made an unexplained get-away in a sea-

plane over the Caribbean.

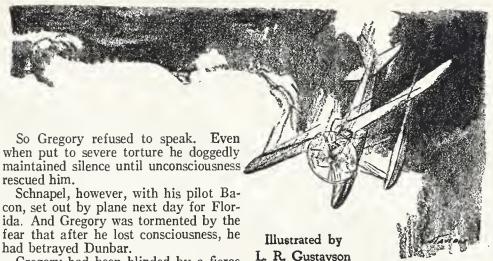
Gregory and his comrades found the position seventy miles from Andros, and found there an uncharted island with bright new buildings shining among its palm-trees. More, they found a cruising scout-plane that swooped upon them without warning and shot them down.

With Melvin dead and McKinnon badly hurt, with one engine dead and one wing crippled, Gregory managed a power dive into a rain-squall and a landing in the temporary shelter of its murk. Then with the plane sinking under them they launched a rubber raft and managed to reach the tip of the island. Leaving the badly wounded McKinnon in Jackson's care, Gregory walked toward the house. He passed through a little cemetery and counted seventeen new-made graves; he came to a dock and started out along it, intending to steal a boat. And then—a harsh, cold voice behind him froze him. "I wouldn't, bud, if I was you!"

At the point of the gun Gregory was taken into the house and into the presence of that sinister giant of the underworld, named Schnapel, who had made this island his refuge and rendezvous. Schnapel demanded to know who had sent Gregory on this flight, who else knew of this secret island. And Gregory knew that if he told, Dunbar would be murdered, to keep the existence of the island secret, and he himself would be killed. Moreover all chance of rescuing Helen Sayles, who was being held prisoner by Schnapel, would be gone.



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Gregory had been blinded by a fierce light used as part of the torture, and was left to the care of Helen Sayles. In Schnapel's absence Brooks, Schnapel's butler, proposed to Helen that they flee in a seaplane that was available. She And after Brooks had stolen part of Schnapel's money, Helen guided the blinded Gregory to the plane, took the controls, and with Brooks took off.

Their flight was short, however. A neglected gas valve halted them; Schnapel's right-hand cutthroat Tresca overtook them in a launch, killed Brooks and brought Helen and Gregory back prisoners. (The story continues in detail:)

THE launch chugged away, and with I a line made fast to the bow bit of the plane, set back toward the island. The water slid almost silently along the metal hull; and in the cabin Dan Gregory and Helen Sayles sat wordlessly.

A sense of frustration and futility, of misery and defeat, weighed heavily upon Gregory. The future loomed blankly, for they were back where they had started, with another failure behind them. Even Gregory's effort to withhold Dunbar's name had been of no avail, he thought; he must have told it, or Schnapel would not have left the island so precipitately.

The seaplane was warped in against the dock, and they were taken off by rough hands who seemed to enjoy seeing Gregory's blindness, to relish the girl's misery and fear. Through the sand once more they plodded up that winding path until they found the lawn beneath their feet, and at last were led through the long, cool corridor to a doorway.

"You're going in there to take care of this guy," Tresca said. "You two make another break, and you'll get your

backs broke—both of you! He still needs doctoring, and it's up to you to fix his eyes. This door'll be unlocked, with a guy standing out here who can come in any time, so don't try nothing, see?"

Gregory felt himself shoved into the room; the door closed, and Helen Sayles took him to a chair; he sank into it dejectedly, and asked: "What time is it?" "Seven-thirty. . . . Well, it didn't work, did it? Mr. Gregory, I'm sorry."

He heard her throw herself upon the bed, a dry sob in her throat.

He asked, curiously unmoved: "What good will that do? We won't get out of this by crying over spilled milk.

She made no answer for a time. And then she said: "But we were doing itwe were getting away. And then I had to go and forget to turn the gas on at the tanks! And it just breaks me up to see you blind, taking all of it so calm-ly, trusting me to—" Her voice trailed off, and then returned, filled with amazement: "How much can you stand? You must be made of iron!"

He said gruffly, with a touch of irritation: "I guess other people have stood more. We're still alive."

"I'd rather be dead!" she said with sudden passion. "Dead-than see what I saw this afternoon—to go on like this, knowing Schnapel—oh, my God—" She broke off, and from the depths of the pillow came the sound of weeping.

HE felt a grudging sympathy for her. "Don't do that!" he said almost harshly. "That won't do you any good. Try to be a fatalist—try to think: We'll get out of this, or we won't; and being cut up about what's happened won't help

in the least. Haven't you been flying long enough to get that point of view?"
"No," she sobbed. "I n-never will be-

lieve that-I don't w-want to believe it."

"It helps," he insisted tersely. "One time, down in Para, I got caught back over the interior with one engine dead, and losing altitude—in a seaplane.

can tell you, it helped me!"

"But it doesn't help me! I'm the cause of your being here—the cause of all this -mess. I'm the cause of your beingblind; and you hate me for it, and I don't blame you for hating me, and yet you tell me it will all be all right or that it won't-" Her voice broke.

He had no time to formulate an an-The door opened, and a grating

voice reached across the room.

It said: "Hello, fella. How you feel? I have some things to say to you."

Impassively, studying the quality of that tone and wondering where, if ever, he had heard it in the past, Dan Gregory returned: "And who the hell are you?"

"Bacon," said the man. "I used to know you-oh, two-three years ago. But you've probably forgotten who I am."

"Bacon-" Gregory repeated, searching his memory. The name did strike a chord that brought response somewhere in his mind. The voice, too, now had an oddly familiar resonance. But he failed to link the name or speech with anyone whom he could visualize.

"Used to fly for Causeway Charters," Bacon went on in that rather high-

pitched tone. "You get it now?"

REGORY recalled, now, what Dunbar had said about a pilot from the Causeway company—a pilot who had started out to Bimini with six men, all under indictment for a variety of crimes. And he remembered that Bacon had worked for that company, and had been the pilot of the plane. He could recall the thin, almost hawkish features of the man, the odd, squint triangles made by the eyelids, and the greenish-blue eyes.

So Dunbar had been right! This island, that day, had been the goal, instead of Bimini. No wreckage in the sea had been discovered, because no wreck ever had occurred. He wondered who had brought the second plane across, and

where the fellow was.

"I get it," he said slowly. "Yes, I get

it. What has it to do with me?"

Bacon returned: "Get comfortable. I'm sorry as hell about your eyes. anything yet—they feeling better?"

Gregory shook his head. "Nothing. They don't hurt quite so much, but—"
"Well, I told 'em about that light. They shouldn't use it. I tried to keep it off of you because a pilot's eyes are all

"Thanks," Gregory returned. He wondered, with a peculiarly suspended malice, if Bacon had been the pilot of the plane which had sent Sparks Melvin and McKinnon to their deaths, and his Sik-

orsky to the sea.

"No," Bacon repeated, "that light is bad. A pilot needs his eyes. A good pilot-good enough to stick around here on the job." He hesitated, as if not knowing just how to phrase his words.

Gregory sat waiting for an instant. Bacon's presence gave him a strange

premonitory chill.

"I don't quite make the drift of that last statement," he declared.

Bacon laughed. "I'd draw you a picture, but you couldn't see it. Here's the lay: we need another pilot. We had two-myself and another guy who came out here about the way I did. he got cold feet and wanted to go back. Well—"

"Well?" Gregory demanded sharply in the tension that was creeping through

the room.

Bacon grunted: "So we're going to need another man. Schnapel has the finger on Murdock; but Murdy doesn't know it yet, of course."

"Murdock? I've heard that name—" "He was around Miami until two-three months ago. He's been back since, but not to stay."

"What's his job? I mean, what was

his job?"

"He had a snow run from Havana to the Everglades—to a base we got out there. But he hasn't got it now." "Where is he now?" Dan Gregory de-

manded bluntly, feeling again a stab of

warning.

"Around," Bacon returned easily. "He's locked up back there in one of the places. He won't," he added, chuckling softly, "be any harm to you."

"And so?" Gregory inquired, a new

harsh edge on his dry tongue.

E wondered, his thoughts charged with restrained hatred, if Bacon had been the pilot who had shot him down that day with a pursuit plane, if Bacon was hired here as Schnapel's trigger man. If Murdock was the other pilot of the two, and Murdock had re-

volted and was locked up for his efforts to withdraw from Schnapel's scheme of things, then Bacon must have been Mel-

vin's murderer.

"And so," Bacon returned, taking up Gregory's former question, "we'll let bygones be bygones, if you're willing to do that. I'm the guy who shot you down, though there isn't any point in telling you except to show you my hand and give you an idea of how we work around here when we have to-"

Gregory, grimacing, interrupted: "If you think I'll work that way, you're wrong. I've always wondered what they'd have to pay a pilot to do what you did to my Duck." And his voice turned grating, venomous when he added: "I wish I could look at you, and see

the kind of man you are!"

Bacon, for the first time, showed a trace of anger. "Stow it," he snapped. "You'll see soon enough. You sit back and listen to my proposition, buddy."

REALIZATION of his own futility and helplessness eased the tenseness of Gregory's muscles. The other must be a smooth and ruthless man, he knew.

"I'm listening," he returned.

"You keep on listening. Your job, temporarily, will be with snow. Once a week from Havana. You'll be based here where we can watch you, naturally. On the run, you'll have a nice guy with you to see you do what you're told! You take it or leave it, buddy, and that's all there is."

Gregory nodded several times, and at last voiced a totally irrelevant question that had been pressing in among his thoughts since he had heard Bacon take off from the dock with Schnapel two days before. "Where," he asked, "did Schnapel go when he left here?"

"You'll never know," Bacon retorted.

"Are you taking this, or leaving it?"
"To Florida?" Gregory insisted. "Did I tell any names, that night when Druggan and Tresca put the pressure on me?"

Bacon chuckled. "If this guy Dunbar knew how hard you tried to keep from

pointing at him—"

"Dunbar!" Gregory repeated. "Godthen I did break down-" His voice trailed off to silence, while he sensed the tragedy of the thing. If he could only have stayed conscious-

"You didn't tell it," Bacon said. "The Chief got it through the radio. He faked a message from you on Mycaba's frequency, and Dunbar answered it. . . .

Now what about this business, anyhow?

Do you take it, or not?"

A weight seemed lifted from the back of Gregory's brain, but there was no relief in knowing that he had sealed his lips effectively. It didn't matter how they learned that Dunbar was connected with this expedition, since they knew it. But by accepting Bacon's offer, he might, if Schnapel did not succeed in cutting Dunbar down immediately, be able to prevent the murder altogether, forlorn as hope seemed now.

"I'll take it," he declared. "I have nothing else to do—"

"You can take the finger, if you've got the guts," Bacon interrupted.

"I'll play along with you," Gregory went on, hatred hidden from his tone. "If that's settled, would you mind telling me some things: Where did this island come from and why are so many mugs hanging around here all the timehow do you live—how do you get food? I've got a lot of curiosity."

"Well," Bacon said shortly, "we don't live here to play checkers. . . . But at that, if you're going to go along with us, you might as well know the whole layout. This is Schnapel's island. He discovered it one night while he was fishing ran aground. Later on he looked it up, and found it wasn't charted-found out it must have been thrown up by that earthquake at Belize, and then covered over by sand. So he came here, got himself a shoal-draft boat, and hauled everything there is on this place over from Havana. That boat's due in here some time tomorrow with the mail and food and stuff-some more new mugs-" "New mugs?"

"Big shots from New York and Chicago who're trying to dodge a rap. They drop out of sight for a while till things cool off. They're friends of Schnapel.'

"WHO is Schnapel?" asked Gregory; and Bacon laughed shortly.

"You don't know? Well, you wouldn't. That's not his real name. But Schnapel is the only really big shot left in New York or Chicago. He's the brains of the rackets in a dozen places; he owns a race-track in the States and another in Cuba. . . . Oh, I'm telling you, Gregory, you'll like the lay-out here!'

"I expect I will!"—dryly. "What's the

proposition?"

"You'll get to live, buddy. You'll get enough money for your needs; but the main thing, you'll get to live. I'm go"Listen, Static," said Tresca, "tell the Chief what's going on-and ask him what we're to do if this island is washed clear off the map!"



ing after Schnapel tomorrow afternoon. I'll tell him you're coming on with us. That's right, isn't it?"

"For how long?" Gregory demanded. "How long? Well, buddy, what do you think?"

REGORY sat for perhaps fifty sec-Jonds without answering. He had hoped, perhaps, to go along with Bacon and Schnapel, trusting to devise a means of saving Dunbar and in future days of getting free. But now he realized that the acceptance of this thing would constitute a life-sentence. He would become a servant to Schnapel, just as Brooks had been one. And in the end, most certainly, he would be destroyed anyway.

Yet if he refused now, knowing what he did, he would from necessity be obliterated quickly, just as the others in that graveyard on this island had been dispatched, without special animosity or interest. So he must accept; he must dissemble and take his place as a lackey -and in the meantime try to hold his self-respect enough to find life bearable.

These things were but quick thoughts in a chain of speculation. What would happen to Helen Sayles, regardless of what choice he himself might make?

"I suppose," Gregory said slowly to Bacon, "there's nothing I can do, in my position, but accept. But I'd like to talk with Schnapel first."

Bacon seemed incredulous. "Talk to Schnapel?" he demanded. "What is there to talk to him about? I don't run this dump—I only work here; but Schnapel told me what to tell you, and I know this is your last chance to live, buddy. Nothing you can say to Schnapel would change it, one way or the other. If you don't accept-"

"What if I do accept, and my eyesight doesn't come back enough that I can

fly?" Gregory inquired.

Bacon cleared his throat, and when he answered his voice held a note almost of kindliness: "What good is a blind man on a place like this? Schnapel doesn't run this as a home for defectives."

Gregory did not answer for a time. In any case, when he had outlived his usefulness to Schnapel, he would be destroyed. In the meantime, if by some remote possibility Dunbar escaped assassination, could Dunbar get out to this island and bring aid? There was that hope. And there was Murdock, who was to be put on the spot. If he could perhaps ally himself somehow with Murdock, he might, with Murdock's help, contrive to make another effort toward escape. It wasn't hopeless, quite.

"Where does Helen Sayles fit into all this?" he asked, and heard the girl stir at the mention of her name.

Bacon's presence seemed for an instant to fill the room with a palpable ugliness. He returned: "Schnapel has his plans for her. She's no concern of yours—she's in here now to try to get your eyes fixed up, and that's all, bud-dy!" He scraped to his feet. "What shall I tell Schnapel?"

Gregory leaned forward, impulsively pulling off the bandage and attempting to peer toward the other man with his unseeing eyes. "Tell him," he said softly, "that I'll play along with him. Not because I want to. But I can't quite bring myself to sign my own death-warrant." And he rushed on, knowing well that he should never utter such a thing, but being unable to restrain himself. He hated Schnapel, Bacon—all the rest of them. "But Schnapel better never trust me as far as he trusts you!"

Bacon laughed, moving toward the door. "I don't think you appreciate this island," he returned. "Well, you'll come to that. The day your eyes are well, you'll go to Florida with the Chief him-



self, to do a job. After that, you'll think this island is the best place on the

earth for you—and then believe me, buddy, it will be!"
"A job?" Gregory's voice was queerly hushed. "I thought I was to fly dope

from Havana-"

"Oh, you'll do that, too. But before that, you'll have the chance to knock off a man the Chief has marked. put the finger on this pilot Murdock, who wants to do the run-out act on all of us. Of course, the cops will find out who did the little thing, and they'll be right behind you when you scram. It will be real nice, then, to have this island here. Nobody knows about it-it'll be here where you can come without worrying about dicks and being run down like a rat. You get it? You see why that graveyard out there got filled up? Funny-when you get that viewpoint, you'll bump off sponge-fishermen when they stumble on this island. Kind of selfprotection, isn't it? . . . Well, I'll tell Schnapel what you said."

His feet scraped away across the floor,

and the door opened and closed.

Gregory sat like a statue in his chair, his pulse pounding with slow violence against his temples, numb with horror.

To save his own life, he must kill another man, in cold blood. . . .

Helen Sayles came over to him and said in a voice made husky by her weeping: "It's time to bathe your eyes." The words were wooden, as if the girl had

As he lay down upon the bed, he said: "They still ache, but they feel as if most of the inflammation's gone. Perhaps—"

She said, in that same wooden tone, "They look a great deal better now-I think you're going to be all right." She started to put fresh cloths in place.

But he restrained her, a wild exultation in his throat that somehow choked him. For he had raised the lids, and felt the light thrust itself against the pupils; there in that dimly lighted room he had seen the outline of the ceiling, the outline of Helen Sayles' face and hair above him as she worked.

A violent trembling came over him, something which he could not in any way control—a vast thankfulness that blindness would not be with him forever. At last, when he could speak, he said to Helen, Sayles in a voice oddly weak:

"Just then I—I could see things in this room! I could see you there above me-" His voice broke with a sob of wild re-

lief.

She did not answer at once, but her fingers, touching his face gently as she put the cloths in place, trembled so that she had to make three efforts to get them as they should be.

T last she murmured, tears in her A voice: "Mr. Gregory, there's no use trying to tell you how—glad I am. It seems, for me, like a-reprieve."

He laughed, a wild note running through the sound. "A reprieve to you? If it's like that to you, think what's going on inside of me—when I never thought I'd see a thing again!" And he rushed on, filled suddenly with the ability to throw aside the sinister things about him, the ability to plan. He said, his voice commanding: "If Tresca or Bacon want to know how my eyes are doing, you tell 'em just about the sameslow improvement, but that it will be days, probably, before I can take the bandage off. You get it?"

"You'd better talk more softly," she interrupted urgently. "Remember, there's

a guard outside that door."

He dropped his voice, whispering eagerly: "If they think I'm still blind, and I act blind, I may be able to do a lot of things after I can find my way about this place! This man Murdock is still here, and maybe I can get to him, and maybe we can get another shot at that seaplane—you see?"
"Yes," she answered anxiously. "But

you mustn't talk so loud! They can

hear you through that door.

"Or— Say, if somehow I could get myself a gun, now that I can see enough to aim it— Keep it hidden in here for a day or two, until my eyes are back to normal, and then we could shoot this place up for fair! I tell you, with my eyesight again—"

Quietly she put her hand across his mouth. "Must you ruin it," she whispered desperately, "by shouting all the time? Don't try to talk. Think it out alone, and tell me in the morning.

He grinned, relaxed there on the bed,

his mind racing on and on.

But reality returned presently. what use were his eyes, when, as soon as they were back to normal, he must go to Florida with Schnapel and kill Murdock or in turn be killed himself?

If he acted, he must do it now.

He said: "You better get some sleep; you may have to lose some later on.

"Are you all right?" she asked.

"Yes. If I could stop thinking for a while—"

So she left him, and lay down on the cot in one corner of the room.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE night was silent, and that huge I dwelling on its sand-spit seemed filled with noises of a hundred kinds. From outside came the steady rhythm of the waves upon the shore. From the hallway now and then a voice sounded in a quiet, somber tone, followed by a varied interim of silence and then another voice in answer. Footsteps now and again paced back and forth. Once Gregory

thought he heard Brooks' oily tone, and started in baffled wonder, sat up quickly—and then realized that at last he had

been asleep.

For a time he had forgotten these sinister things. The memory of his dream, the memory of Brooks' voice, brought them back with shocking force; and the scene that afternoon when Brooks had died washed back across his mind.

E fumbled in the dark at the bandage which Helen Sayles had fastened on his head. The ache had left his eyes almost entirely. And to his amazement, with the bandage gone, he stared about the room, able to distinguish objects with some clarity in the moonlight that filtered through the windows.

He stifled an ejaculation at the improvement of his vision, and through his veins again ran warm exultation. He swung his feet to the floor and crossed the room, stood at the tall windows for a moment, drinking in the scene outside.

The room gave upon the broad east lawn, and beyond the lawn Gregory could see palm trees silhouetted there, trunks curving gracefully from the sand and straightening, surmounted by the oddly star-shaped crests of fronds. Beyond them was the sea, and the boatdock, and the seaplane riding serenely.

The sky was filled with lacy clouds, flecks of mist against the steel-gray of the upper air. Stars were clear and white, those that penetrated through the opaque illumination of the moon. The wind was whispering gently through the screen against his face, for the window, now, was open. He looked for the guard supposed to be posted outside somewhere on the lawn, but did not see one.

A dozen random thoughts passed through his mind. With his eyes again, he might do anything! He might get out there and steal that seaplane, after rousing Helen Sayles. He might find the arsenal in this dwelling, if there was one. And he might find the radio transmitter which served Schnapel from this place! He reasoned that there must be one.

He half turned to look back into the room. It lay in shadows, the moonlight restricted to one splash that lay across the floor and one corner of the dresser. The cot on which Helen Sayles was sleeping was almost within his reach, but he did not disturb her now. First find the radio. Get word out to Dunbar! They could make other plans when that was done. Get into action, now; get dressed!

He whirled and crossed to the dresser, where the luminous figures of a clock glowed dully. To his amazement the clock hands pointed to four twenty-five. He had slept seven hours; his eyes had had the benefit of all that time, and their improvement had not, then, been as

rapid as he had supposed.

He put the clock down silently, and bare-footed, moved across the room once more and looked out the windows at the moon. It was near its zenith now; he should have known it was much later than he first had thought, by that alone. Now, with daylight coming soon, it would be too late to search very much about this place. Being caught now would be worse than making no attempt at all, for it would thwart an effort that might be made tonight.

Yet he could not escape the feeling of urgency that pervaded every thought; Dunbar was involved in this, and did not know his danger. Impulsively Gregory turned back and put on his clothes. Then he moved to the door and stood there with ear pressed against the panel. No sound came from the hall outside; no footsteps of a guard on duty. Gregory turned the knob cautiously, holding his

breath, his heart pounding.

He was a little astonished when the door gave way. It swung back noiselessly, inch by inch, until he could thrust his head outside and peer up and down the hall with furtive haste.

A LIGHT burned at the ceiling, reflected on the polished floor in dull brillance. Nowhere was a guard evident. Puzzled, knowing the chances he now took of being shot if discovered prowling through the house, he moved outside, silently shut the door, and turned left toward the living-room. He moved slowly, feigning to grope his way so that if discovered, his improved eyesight would not be observed.

He did not know his way about this house, and now, because of that, he proceeded with an infinite care. The radio transmitter might be somewhere in the house, or it might be in one of the smaller buildings in the rear. There must be one of some sort—either that, or Bacon had lied when he said that Schnapel directed criminal activities on a far-flung scale from here. For such operations quick communication was essential.

He passed through the hall, leaving Helen Sayles behind him in that unlocked room. He eased himself past the dining-room, and passed into the long, high living-room. Here were all the things that he had seen before; here was an atmosphere of restfulness and taste and calm well-being. In one corner, dimly visible beneath the wash of moonlight, was a grand piano that he had failed to see when coming in with Druggan. But his searching eyes, although they found the radio-receiver that Brooks had used to listen to Schnapel's message baiting Dunbar, could find none of the transmitting facilities which he was positive existed somewhere near.

CURSING his stupidity then, beneath his breath, he tried the door, to get outside. The radio would be marked by an antenna, perhaps by towers that could be seen clearly in this moonlight. He should have thought of that in the beginning. And time was pressing, now, for the eastern sky was slowly turning to a faint light at the horizon.

He could not get outside from either of the living-room doors, or from the patio. So at last, with growing agitation, he retraced his steps and went once more down the long dim hall until he reached the kitchen. And the kitchen

door he found unlocked.

Quickly, then, he passed outside, under a spreading palm that leaned into the The wind, he noticed without west. fully being conscious of it, was in the northeast, fairly strong, a steady force that pressed against him, bringing a tang of salt and sea and a moist chill. He turned and walked rapidly until he had passed from beneath the fringe of palms that stood as guardians about the house. Free of them, he lifted his eyes and searched the horizon for the thin towers that would mark the radio antenna and the building housing the equipment. If there were towers there, he could not see them.

But he did see something else. In the first small building in that semi-circular group that was ringed about the rear of Schnapel's dwelling, the windows were ablaze with light. Beyond the windows a dozen men, or more, were grouped about a central object. The men moved back and forth, and even at this distance, knowing they were there, Gregory could hear the distant, muffled voices drifting back upon the wind. There was excitement in their tones.

Furtively Gregory approached, careful to be close enough to cover to dodge out of sight if necessity required it. He reached the building, stood for a moment looking in, and then moved around and crouched below an open window. A powerful transmitter stood in one corner of the room. On the desk before the operator were four late-type receivers, and a fifth of a style which Gregory had never seen before. The operator was a youngish man, wearing now a cap pulled low over his eyes, and earphones clamped with the band outside the cap. He sat at a typewriter, taking down the messages that flowed into his ears.

And about him stood fourteen men, of fourteen types and sizes, yet each showing that same viciousness that was so evident in Tresca, who stood nearest the operator. And there was, Gregory perceived in the one prolonged look he took before dropping out of sight again, an atmosphere of tension, almost fear, among

them all.

CHAPTER XIX

"RESCA'S voice cut through the murmurings: "Dammit, tell the Chief! We can't do anything against a hurri-The Henry \overline{D} . Purley will be here at noon; unless we turn it back, it'll be lost sure as hell. The-"

"Turn it back?" some one interjected. "I'm not stayin' here with no hun'redan'-thirty-mile-an-hour wind comin', an' you can put that in the book! can't all fly outta here. Them that can't fly will have to git out on the *Purley*. Tell it to come on!"

A hurricane was headed here!

Gregory had lived in these southern latitudes for years, and he had seen the force of those cyclonic areas of wind which, each fall, sweep up from somewhere in the south Atlantic, brewing wind such as few people in the interior of this country ever feel. He had been in the midst of the hurricane of '26 at Miami; in it he had seen the wind howl out of the northeast until it was blowing steadily at a hundred and twenty miles an hour. And then suddenly the wind had died, replaced by a leaden, sultry calm in which there was a lifeless and sinister oppression. The calm continued —one hour, almost two; and then the fury of the storm returned and smashed the town from an exactly opposite direction. People were picked up and hurled through space like thistledown before a summer breeze. As Gregory had watched, crouched in safety in his room, he had

seen a dog flung past his window—sixty feet above the ground.

These men—they must, some of them, have lived down here for years—knew all about it too. And now, Dan Gregory knew, they meant to take leave of this

island and escape to safety.

Tresca said: "That's right, Dingo; that's right. . . . Listen, Static—tell the Chief what's going on, and tell him I'm bringing the Purley here on schedule to take off everybody from this place. We wouldn't have much chance in that wind-seas will break right over the Tell him highest point on this island! I'll close up everything and get ready to take it on the lam. Ask him what he's going to do, and where we're to meet him. Ask him what we're to do if this island is washed clear off the map!"

Bacon's voice, that familiar rasping tenor, cut in and reached to Gregory's straining ears: "Ask him where I'll take this seaplane-shall I come after him, or

beat it to Havana?"

Code was sputtering into the earphones of the operator, so loud now that Gregory could make out a little of it. As he was trying to piece together the message, the operator's voice snapped the room to silence, halted Gregory's thoughts and held them suspended:

"Turks Island has a southwest wind now—a hundred and fourteen miles an hour."

"Jeez!" some one exclaimed.

"Passed Turks," Bacon said crisply. "Passed right over the place—and she's headed here!"

"Great Inagua has northeast sixty-four

and rising steadilý."

Following a strained silence, Tresca demanded: "How fast is it moving—what time will it hit here?"

"Nine-ten miles an hour," the operator said promptly. "That was from the Washington advisory last night."

"Hit here tomorrow about noon or before," Bacon said. "Good God-a boat to land, and get off again—and I've got to get Schnapel!"

SILENCE drifted from the window. The operator worked at his key, calling a letter-group that Dan Gregory could not read.

The clicking of the relays was a faint chirping somewhere in the background of the room, too far away, too muffled to interpret. In a low voice of awe some one inside declared:

"Don't seem possible there could be



that much wind—and almost calm here. There aint much wind here now-no waves to speak of--"

Tresca said with rising impatience: "Come on, Static! Get the Chief! I got work to do, and the *Purley's* due here before noon."

The operator, with practiced imperturbability, returned: "I'm doing my best. This ultra-short wave isn't so good this time in the morning. I can't raise him."

"You've got another wave-length,"

Bacon reminded. "Try that on him."
"Me?" asked the operator. He laughed grimly. "And have somebody spot this island when they pick up a few words of code? Have Schnapel put a hole in me? You fly your airplanes, Mister; but I'm taking orders from the Chief!"

Dan Gregory listened to no more. The east was already growing opaque, and the light of the moon was being displaced a little by the light of dawn. He had learned all he needed. He moved furtively away, seeing, now, the tall masts of the antenna in the better lightgray towers a hundred feet in height. Reaching the palms, he ran, fear speeding his footsteps through the sand.

For he believed now that this hurricane had drawn all the island's inhabitants except Helen Sayles and himself to that radio-shack. He understood why he had been left unguarded; he probably could have escaped at any time since eleven o'clock, because the Washington advisory, bringing the first news of the storm, was broadcast at ten. Now, if he could rouse Helen Sayles soon enough, he could get down to the dock and complete what they had attempted yesterday—take off in that plane for Florida!

JE reached the house and passed Through the kitchen, down the long hall, and through the door. It was not yet fully light within the room, and his eyes were not at their best yet. He moved across the room to the cot in the corner, where the figure still lay sleeping, and put his hand out to waken Helen Sayles, and spoke quietly but urgently: "Helen-come out of it!" He shook her shoulder beneath the sheet, not too gently. "Wake up!" he commanded.
The figure stirred. A masculine voice

grunted a protesting sigh, and then mumbled an oath. A man—as soon as his face was free of the sheet, Gregory recognized him as Croft—sat up in bed, still spilling curses, and rubbing his eyes.

"I'll be a—" Gregory began, and

"I'll be a—" Gregory began, and checked himself. Standing there, a surge of anger almost made him forget caution. But he added quietly: "Go back to sleep—I thought you were Tresca." In vast relief he watched Croft drop back, heard him grumble a time or two and then resume a deep, almost inaudible breathing.

He turned back toward the door, impatient to find Helen Sayles. Tresca and Bacon and the others would be coming back at any moment, probably; time already might be too short to get her and get out to the seaplane. At best, it

would be fully daylight.

There were five bedrooms in this massive house, apparently. Gregory moved soundlessly along the hall, pausing at each one, trying the knob and looking in, finding each in turn unoccupied. But the fifth was locked. He knocked softly, called in a hoarse whisper, careful not to waken Croft, "Helen!" three or four times. But there was no response.

WHERE was she? In rising anger he discarded caution and explored the kitchen and the servants' quarters—went into every room he could, but did not find a trace of her. At last he went back to his own room, puzzled and exasperated. Where was the girl? He swore softly, thinking: "At the only time I can do

her any good, she's gone!"

Of course, he could go down to the dock now and take that plane alone. His eyes, forced to it, would withstand the strain of flying the three hours required to reach Florida. Yesterday he might have done that. At any time, after seeing Melvin and McKinnon killed—at any time until Helen Sayles had made her valiant effort to help him—he might have used this opportunity. But not now.

Each passing minute increased his agitation. To occupy himself with some activity he went into the bath and shaved, still harried by unending con-

jectures.

Dawn was breaking. Gregory, ears attuned to catch the faintest sound of movement in the house, went to the window that gave him unobstructed view across the lawn and to the sea a hundred yards away.

The incongruity of the peace that lay upon this scene struck him with pal-

pable force. Here was silence, with the wind a sighing breath from league on league across the open water. The ocean lay tier on tier, white-flecked swells as far as he could see. It seemed impossible that a hurricane could be raging somewhere southeast of this spot now, bearing down upon it with ferocious surety.

As he stood there staring into the slowy graying dawn, gradually he became conscious of a sound that floated through the screen and reached his ears, surging louder with the surging of the wind, and then falling back and merging with the silence of the morning. Twice he picked it out, and was not sure of what it was. Then, for the third time it came again, a distant chug-chug-chug-chug of a heavy-duty engine somewhere

on the sea.

Filled with a gathering excitement, he strained his eyes across that width of rolling water. And then, finally he saw the boat—a dory that already had almost reached the beach at the southern tip of this narrow, curving island. He glanced at the figure still asleep there on the cot, fearful that Croft might awaken at the meager sound. He could not be sure at this distance, but there seemed to be three men in the boat—one crouched at the bow, another amidships and a third clinging to the tiller at the stern. The dory plunged into the surf, the thudding of the engine varying its cadence regularly as the stern rose upon each wave.

Fascinated and yet puzzled, Gregory watched. For a moment he could not imagine who might be in the craft. And then, remembering, he knew this must be Jackson, coming back to help!

CHAPTER XX

JACKSON, returning! Why, at this time in the morning? What could he do? Why hadn't he gone on to Nassau when he got the boat that night and got away? Why hadn't he reached Cuba, perhaps, and from there sent word to Dunbar? How could three men hope to cope with Schnapel's killers? There was, Gregory knew, no hope at all.

But perhaps Jackson had expected everyone within this massive house to be asleep at this hour just preceding daylight. Perhaps Jackson had meant to reach here earlier, to use darkness for a cover, and had been delayed. Gregory wondered where he had found two men

who would return here with him on an expedition of this kind. It was seventy miles to the nearest island; farther, probably, to one where help could be obtained. Andros was almost uninhabited. Great Exuma had a bare handful of sponge-fishermen; Long Island was almost as forlorn. Lin Jackson, Gregory reasoned, must have laid out careful plans which had a possibility of success, and then something had gone wrong.

None of that, however, mattered now. Jackson was here, and that was fact; and the thing that mattered was that Jackson, thinking to surprise Schnapel's men, would himself be taken by surprise.

To warn Jackson of these facts, Greggory would have to go back through the hall and through the kitchen and then come once more to the front part of the grounds. He had tried last night to get out through the living-room, and failed. But if he went back now, he would encounter Tresca's men.

OR another instant he stood there, trying to coordinate his thoughts. He saw the bow of Jackson's boat snuggle in the water as the chugging of the engine stopped abruptly. He saw the boat glide in and beach itself perhaps two hundred yards south of the dock at which the seaplane rode. And he saw three men, vaguely outlined in the drab gray of morning, leap from the bow into the white foam of the breaker wash, and run, crouched low, up the flat incline of the beach and disappear for an instant behind a dunelike mound of sand.

He left the window and hurried silently through the hall toward the kitchen, moving cautiously, intent on getting

outside without discovery.

As merging voices reached his ears, he stopped abruptly, listened for an instant, and realized that Tresca's men were already at the door behind the house. So he whirled and retraced his steps and reached the living-room, and

peered out across the lawn.

Jackson's trio had moved forward toward the house until they were now not more than a hundred yards away. Even now, Gregory thought in a wave of desperation, they could have sprinted to a front window, bashed in a heavy screen with quick blows of their gun-butts, and obtained ingress to the house before Tresca's men learned of their presence. They could still use the weapon of surprise, if they but knew. But they did not know, and he had no way to tell them.

Impulsively he flung open a window and called softly through the screen. The wind, he thought, would help lift his

voice to them out there.

"Lin! This way—break through here!" Almost as he spoke, from the spill of his vision he caught sight of two men moving past the house down toward the dock; he saw these men pause and look at the window where he stood, and then saw one of them fling up his arm and point at the trio which now was partially shielded by the palm trunks fringing Schnapel's lawn.

This man shouted hoarsely. The other turned and ran back and disappeared from Gregory's view. Cursing himself for having voiced this warning, Gregory saw Jackson's men huddled together as if debating what move they should make. Then almost immediately there came a pounding of shoes through the kitchen. From outside sounded a medley of voices in surprise and anger and command. Tresca's snarl stood out above the others, and Bacon's peculiar tenor twang cut through the din.

A gun outside exploded; and as if at this signal, Jackson's men turned and started racing for the boat they had left a hundred yards away. Gregory under-Jackson was no fool. He had meant to take this island by surprise, and now that was impossible. He knew he could not stand against a dozen men. Retreat was the only sane course left.

But he did not make it. Just when he had cleared the protection of the palms, a volley sounded from the house, with the quick rapping of a machine-gun coming as a muffled sound through the thick walls to Gregory's ears. Before the pilot's startled eyes one of the men ahead of Jackson went down in a lurching heap, lay for an instant and then started crawling sluggishly back to the protection of a tree.

FTER that things seemed mixed in wild disorder, yet enacted in a kind of disconnected clarity. He saw Jackson turn back to dive behind a palm, and remembered thinking that the palm trunks out there offered some protection —for a while. And even then it seemed a bit of irony that Schnapel's whim in having full-grown trees transplanted to this island should be the means of prolonging the lives of men whom Schnapel's men set out to kill.

Jackson reached a tree. The third man, just behind him, was three strides



He saw his victim sprawling on the sand.

away when a bullet checked his pace. He stopped, seemed to stiffen, his right hand lifting with a rifle still gripped tightly in it. And then his fingers unclenched, the gun dropped and stuck into the sand upon the muzzle. The man stood there with his knees buckling beneath his sagging weight. Another volley, a quick tat-tat-tat of a machine-gun, bowled him over like a violent blast of wind.

A cold horror filled Dan Gregory at seeing these things. Helpless where he was, and helpless to go back through the hall and get outside, unconsciously he continued voicing frenzied shouts of warning. He did not know it fully when Tresca's crew—some part of it—came into the room, with Bacon in the lead. He did not realize he was surrounded by these men until Bacon grabbed his shoulder and whirled him on his heels.

"Shut your damn' face!" Bacon snarled, clutching Gregory's upper arm with steely fingers. He waved his other hand to the four men who had followed him into the room. "Let 'em have it," he went on, his voice a vibrant twang. "Go on—through the screen."

Gregory's unbelieving eyes saw' then that two of these men had sub-machine-

guns clenched in their hands. One of them growled:

"They're hid down behind the treetrunks now. We'll have to wait for Tresca to flank 'em out of there."

PACON sneered: "Gregory, you're a fool. The Chief offered you a proposition that was better than you could expect to get—he should have bumped you in the beginning and saved trouble. Bringing these punks to give you a hand was plain dumb. Schnapel will bump you for this when he hears about it."

One of the men said, "Oke—let 'em have it," and raised his machine-gun to aim through the screen. Gregory, knowing that whatever he might do would prove futile, raised his left arm and struck down the muzzle just as the gunman squeezed the trigger. A shivering thunder reverberated on the walls; the muzzle, jerking with each shot, was pressed down beneath the weight of Gregory's hand, and the bullets ate through the screen in a curving line that ended in shattered woodwork at the sill.

"Give him a chance!" Gregory roared at Bacon. "You've got him trapped. Don't murder him—he'll surrender!"

And Bacon's steely-soft voice came back instantly: "Who wants 'em to surrender? What good would they be?—Lefty, cut down on 'em again. . . . Now, you crazy man!" He shoved a gun-muzzle into Gregory's right side. "On back to your room, or I'll let you have this in the belly."

Gregory, helpless fury almost driving him insane, lifted his hands and walked back through the room, into the hall and once again into the room where he had left Helen Sayles last night and awakened this morning to discover Croft. Behind him the machine-guns were going in that expensive living-room. Somewhere behind the house were voices in action, and more guns, cracking spitefully. And out there behind a meager palm trunk was Lin Jackson, fighting for his life—and probably losing it this moment. Hands aloft ahead of Bacon's gun, Gregory entered the room. Croft, he saw, was gone now, probably engaged somewhere in the fight outside. Helen Sayles was still nowhere in evidence. Sounds of the battle came through the window with a clattering repercussion, surges of noise upon the rising windshouts and bellowed orders and gunfire.

Bacon demanded in a harsh and tinny voice: "Is that the member of your crew

who stole a boat from here three-four

nights ago?"

Gregory nodded, standing looking through the window. A man's head brushed by, the hair visible as he crouched in stealthy movement. A voice out there said: "Got two of 'em, by God! Tresca's on the other side, and we'll smoke the last one out!" Gregory, pity for Lin Jackson welling up within him, blurted: "Yes. . . . For God's sake, Bacon, give him a chance to surrender!"

Bacon's voice was ruthless. "Sit down ... We can't use him. You didn't know a hurricane is heading here—that we're leaving this place right away." He went on in a subtly changed tone: "You and I are taking Murdock to Florida this afternoon—so you can do your stuff. . . . I just got orders from the Chief. I told him you were still blind, and he said bump you off if you couldn't see enough to do this job. . . . Well, I see luck's with you; I see you're not blind now."

CHAPTER XXI

AN GREGORY sat down listlessly, looking at Bacon's hawkish features with eyes aching from strain. He knew he would never be able to kill Murdock. The thing was over. But he said, to distract Bacon's thoughts from this grim

"Where is Helen Sayles? I left her in this room last night, and this morning I woke up and found Croft sleeping in

the other bed."

Bacon leered: "She's locked up in Schnapel's bedroom. After all, we must

have some propriety, even here."

Gregory shook his head. "She isn't in any of the bedrooms. I tried to find her a while ago. You'd better see if something's happened. Some of these hellions-"

He broke off suddenly, for the sounds of firing had stopped. It was a sharp silence, oppressive by its very emptiness after that ear-splitting racket; it washed back through the open door, and with it, from the living-room came a gunman's voice, explaining:

"Tresca's gonna rush him. They's only one left, and we're not gettin' anywhere like this!" A moment later the four men from the living-room filed past the door going to the kitchen. The last one paused and thrust his head inside and said to Bacon:

"Tresca's takin' one outfit and I'm takin' the other, and we're goin' at this punk from two sides-usin' the sand ridges above the beach for cover. We'll get him, that way."

Bacon stood up, his little eyes jerking from the gunman to Gregory and then back again. Gregory opened his lips to make a last futile plea, but Bacon cut him short before he could say anything. Bacon snapped: "Can we do anything

from upstairs?"

"Can't' get in Schnapel's room," the gunman said quickly. "You got that broad in there, and she's bolted the door inside. We aint got time to bust the door. This way will work, all right enough. We'll get him."

Bacon moved toward the door, his feet scraping lightly in that habitual gait. "You'd better get him! The boat's going to be here any time, and we've got to scram. I've got to get the Chief, and bring him back this afternoon so he can get his dough." He paused, looking at some one who had come into the hall and was now standing beyond Gregory's line of vision. "Hello, Tresca," he said. "You'd better get that guy, and get him quick. I've got to get away from here in time to bring the Chief back before dark, and I'm not running through an enfilade to do it, see?"

Tresca growled: "The Chief can wait until we get this guy. If it comes down to it, we can load the dough on board the Purley, and you won't have to come back

here tonight.

"Yeah?" Bacon rasped. "A million and a quarter in the Big Guy's safe, and he just changed the combination so no one but him knows it, now that Brooks has been rubbed out. Do you think he'd trust such heavy sugar to an outfit like what's going on the *Purley*, especially when they're trying to dodge a hurricane —and might come up missing? Don't kid yourself—and don't start getting ideas now. I'm to go after Schnapel and have him back here before dark; and if I don't, somebody's going to get burnt plenty for it, see? And I've got to leave here pretty soon."

"Quit belly-aching," Tresca snapped. "Get yourself a typewriter and come on

-and see what you can do."

THEY all seemed to forget Gregory then. Bacon went out and closed the door and locked it from the outside. His footsteps moved away, and there was no sound for a time but the soft sighing of the wind and the distant murmur of voices as Schnapel's men prepared to rout

Lin Jackson from his post.

Gregory, staring obliquely through the window, saw one group make its cautious way from the house to the beach, far back and out of range of Jackson's fire. He knew that the other party on the other side was doing this same thing, and that both would progress slowly up the beach, protected by the rim of sand until they came to those points from which their flanking fire could strike Jackson.

He tried to take the screen down from the window, but could not; it was fastened there with heavy screws. And watching those men, he wondered what good he could do when at last he got outside. They were almost even with the house now, and only because of this greater elevation could he see them as they crouched behind the dunes. They reached the boat-dock, and passed it.

JUST then, from somewhere above him, came the chatter of a machine-gun. Watching that group as he was, he saw them stop as if struck down, saw them look quickly back toward this house, saw one of them drop down from sight, and then saw the others turn and sprint in wild disorder out along the dock and crowd into the dock-house for protection. Even as they ran, two more of their number dropped, and one of these rolled off the dock into the sea, and disappeared from view.

Dan Gregory for a moment could not understand. He remembered swiftly Schnapel's money in that safe as Bacon had described it, and wondered if some member of the crew had decided to obliterate the others and take that fortune for himself. But that could not be: the *Purley* would be here soon, with more of Schnapel's men. He stood there, listening to the slapping of the gun, watching the spread of beach from which these gunmen had been driven as by a

blast of flame.

Then, from that same point above him came the tense and urgent voice of Helen Sayles: "Dan Gregory—where are you? I'm here in the cupola—upstairs. Come through Schnapel's bedroom and you'll

find the way."

He couldn't believe that it was Helen Sayles, and yet he knew her voice and knew that it was so. All the others were outside, moving forward to get Jackson, to be rid of Jackson's sniping rifle when the *Purley* came, to dock and take them out of there. He shouted back, before he stopped to think how he would find a way to get to her: "Coming! Hold them back!" He forgot that he was weary, that he had been sick with anxiety for her and Lin. He swung back to the door, and threw his weight against it until the unrelenting panel bruised his shoulder and he had to stop from pain.

There was no way through that door. Outside, down in the dock-house, were six or more of Schnapel's gunmen—and this window was within their range. But he had to get up there to that cupola. He had to. He didn't know how long Helen Sayles could hold them back; he found it hard to believe that she had held them back at all. So he raised his foot and kicked the screen viciously a dozen times and ripped the edges out; and then, glancing quickly down the slope and out across the surf to the dockhouse, he made sure that there were no men in sight.

He didn't remember much about crawling through and dropping to the lawn and running south until he was beyond their line of fire, around the corner of the house. Excitement was like a drugging vapor in his senses, for he knew that they would shoot, and half expected them to cut him down. He moved because his mind said move, but none of it seemed altogether real. And then he was around the corner, where they

couldn't see him any more.

He looked up, and the cupola was there. It was an arched affair, and now steel shutters were drawn down across the openings, like the shutters he had seen in Havana on the store-fronts after business hours. But these had slots in them, and as he watched, he saw a black gun-muzzle slide out and then withdraw, and he heard Helen Sayles again:

"Dan! Quick!"

CREGORY had meant to break out another screen at the front of the house, go in and try to force the door of Schnapel's bedroom and go up the stair. But he realized now that Helen Sayles could not watch both groups constantly, for one of them was in the dock-house and the other was somewhere across the island. She had forced them back by the shocking power of that first volley from her gun, but they could retreat and then seclude themselves within the smaller buildings near the radio-shack

and there fortify themselves indefinitely. He could not take time with Schnapel's door. He shouted: "Raise the shutter on this wall, and I'll be up, outside."

The window down here had a pair of swinging shutters, like all houses of its type; Gregory reached up, swung himself upon the window-ledge and thence scrambled quickly up and reached a footing on the shutter top. The hinges creaked, and once he almost fell as the panel swung beneath his weight, but he steadied himself with palms flat against the wall. From here he could barely reach the bottom of the cupola opening; with this meager handhold he swung himself aloft and inched his way across the ledge and dropped.

HELEN SAYLES let the shutter clang down into place, then turned and thrust her gun into his hands. He took it, feeling the heat of the metal and the oddly contrasting chill of her fingers.

He shouted: "Where's Jackson? Keep them back from him." And he crossed the room and peered out toward the northwest, where the second group of

men must be.

They were already in the radio building, he saw. He heard Helen Sayles walk across the room and take a place at the east side, watching the others in the dock-house. Inaudibly Gregory cursed himself for being slow in getting here. This thing might grow prolonged, for now both sides were solidly entrenched. If he had come sooner—

Just then one man broke from the radio building and sprinted toward the house. They had no thought of prolongation! This would be fought out now.

He poked the gun-muzzle through the slot before his eyes. He aimed and pressed the trigger. The barrel jumped frantically against his fingers, and he felt the jarring recall on his shoulder. The hammering shocks disrupted vision for a moment. But when he released the pressure on the trigger, he saw his victim sprawling on the sand.

A queer sense of authority and power filtered through his brain at seeing this. There was no horror, no pity for the man he had struck down. Rather, something savage seemed loosed within him, and he crouched there, ready for any others

who might come into view.

He knew there might be more, and he knew he might not be successful in hitting all of them. Some might reach the house below, and then attack would come simultaneously from three directions. The thing now was to get Lin Jackson here without delay, and then, relieved of that responsibility, await whatever came.

"Watch this position for a minute," he called softly to the girl without removing his eyes from that small white building where the gunmen were.

She crossed the room and stood beside him, and for a moment he could sense the fear possessing her, contradicted by the coolness and the strength with which she had met the crisis awhile ago. There were, he realized, qualities in this woman he had not observed before. She was somehow not the same girl he had seen that first night. And he knew that she would never seem the same to him again.

Quickly he passed the weapon to her, and stepped back to raise the shutter. This place was obviously a kind of arsenal, no doubt planned by Schnapel with that same relentless care with which the other things upon this island had been built. The shutters could be raised and fastened innocently against the ceiling, out of sight. The room gave an open view upon all sides—far down the island north and south and out across the white-flecked, undulating sea. Inside were amazing devices for defense. Ammunition racks on which submachine-gun drums were stacked in oily neatness; gun-cases, full, no doubt; a cache of food; cots that folded up against the walls.

He raised the wide shutter on the south and cupped his hands and shouted toward that fringe of palms. "Lin! You can make it here—we'll cover your advance!"

They could do that. The house stood between Jackson's position and the radio building. The second group, imprisoned in the dock-house, probably would not see Jackson's sprinting figure until too late to throw down an enfilading fire. This could work—it must work!

THEN he heard the gun going in the hands of Helen Sayles, and whipped around. The sound cracked against his ears with an odd metallic sound through the constricted loophole. The pounding recoil of the gun against her shoulder seem to shake her. And then the detonations ended. She said in a thin, stifled tone: "I stopped them. They were trying to get in close to the house, down where I couldn't shoot at them."

He felt a quick relief, and a surge of admiration for her for an instant, and

then lifted the shutter once more and threw his voice across that space of lawn to Jackson. The reporter did not show Impatiently Gregory shouted himself. twice again.

And suddenly he saw a form detach itself from the fat trunk of a palm. Jackson zigzagged, head bent, sprinting.

Gregory watched in a kind of frigid catalepsy. It seemed an infinity of time during which Jackson, out of the trees, crossed the lawn in plain view of the dock-house. And all the time Gregory kept thinking: "If he gets through, we'll have to break for it and reach the plane, somehow." Dimly he heard the distant popping of three guns, and stood there rigidly waiting to see Jackson crumple on the grass. But Jackson kept on coming, dodging like a frightened rabbit.

And then he had made it, and was climbing up to them, scrambling up the wall, while Gregory reached down and

helped him-

THE reporter dropped inside, panting, staring in a kind of disbelief at these things he saw. He was ragged, with his shirt torn half from his shoulder, and there was a dirty smear of blood across his ch**e**ek.

Helen Sayles put down her gun mechanically, moving as though she might be in a dream. Gregory folded down the shutter; and then, in the gloom that crowded in upon them in this room,

turned back to the girl.

She was standing now watching him intently, yet seeming to look through him at some object just beyond. Even in that half-light he saw the horror in her eyes, the strain and pallor of her face. took one step toward her, and she seemed to shrink back against the wall, her hands upon her breast. And then, as he reached her, she seemed stricken with an ague. A stifled cry, a sob, escaped her parted lips, and she bent her head and lifted shaking fingers to her eyes.

He grasped her shoulders with unconsciousness roughness. "What is it?" he asked, his voice taut. "We can't lose time. We've got to get that plane."

She was helpless. Some hidden force seemed to strike her through and leave her swaying on her feet. She screamed, a short, rasping sound, hysterical.

Dan Gregory supported her, for she would have collapsed there on the floor. He did not speak, for at that moment there was nothing adequate that he could

find to say. Her ragged sobs left him with a feeling of helplessness and pity.

"I killed him!" she gasped, and horror seemed to choke her. "I killed himkilled him-killed him! It's too-too dreadful. It keeps coming back. I see him lying there. I'll always see him lying there. I'll always know that I-"

"Stop it," he said gently. "What else could you do? Don't dwell on it. Buck up. We've got to get away from here and get that plane."

In his arms, her head hard against his shoulder, she tried to recall the courage that had supported her throughout this ordeal. But she could not. "I know I had to," she said weakly. "But-that doesn't seem to help. He's—he's dead, and I killed him!" She sobbed, while Gregory let precious minutes pass unheeded.

Strangely, in that moment, his entire concept of her was reversed. He did not realize fully then; the complete understanding of his feelings came much later. But then, holding her against him and feeling the repeated sobs that racked her body, his compassion and his inability to comfort her were strong disturbing forces.

And he knew that though he might try, there would never be much that he could do, except offer sympathy and faith and understanding to this lovely girl. That scene would be re-lived unnumbered times before time dimmed the memory.

"Buck up," he said. "Come up fighting, because we're not through yet. The Purley will be here before long. We've got to go. We've got to hold them back and get that plane."

ACKSON said: "Dan, can we get to the plane? With those guys down there in the dock-house twenty yards away? Not a chance!"

"We can't stay here. You don't know it, but a hurricane is headed here-less than thirty hours away, probably. This island will be abandoned this afternoon as soon as a boat can land and take everything away. So the plane is our last chance."

Helen Sayles lifted her tear-stained face. Her voice was hoarse: "But he-Schnapel's—coming back this afternoon. From here, when he lands, we—we could force him to surrender and then get away and—and take him with us, couldn't we?"

"And if we can't force him to surrender—what's going to happen then?"

No one answered.

This vivid novel comes to a dramatic conclusion in the next, the July, issue.

The Tool Dresser

By FRANK KNOX HOCKMAN

UBBY" Morrison limped painfully to the side of the road, plopped himself down on the harsh grass that the frosts of late fall had turned into rustling brown needles, and stared disconsolately at the mass of leather that had once been his left shoe.

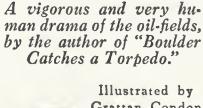
With a stubby-fingered hand, powerful for all of its whiteness-the unmistakable whiteness which identifies itself as hospital pallor—he turned the sole upward and inspected the great hole that disclosed a two-inch ring of raw and bleeding flesh. Tubby was literally on

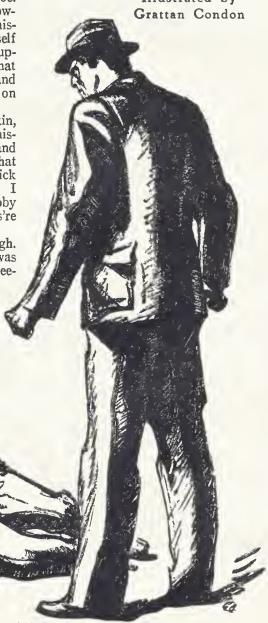
his uppers.

"When the frost has froze the punkin, then the road gets hard to walk," he misquoted with a wry grin, his left hand feeling tenderly the angry red scar that ran from his cheek-bone up into the thick black hair above his temple. "Gosh! I wish I could find me a job, an' mebby ease up a little on my dogs. Things're gettin' right down tough."

Things with Tubby were indeed tough. And his own independent pride was largely at fault. Just out of a three-

Fists doubled, Bull stood over the astounded Grease, declar-ing he was ready to produce the same effect, for any others who might desire it.





months' stay in the hospital, broke, and still weak, he wouldn't beg. When he left the hospital, back in the Illinois gasfields, and headed east for home, he thought he had enough money left to see him through. But he had been weaker than he realized; his progress had been slow and labored. Still, even after the few dollars that remained to him when he paid his hospital bill were gone, he managed to get along.

NOW, with two hundred miles yet to cover to reach home, his shoes had given out. This was tragic. As Tubby stared down the rough, frozen road that meandered across the countryside, his grav eyes were a bit panic-stricken. The only sign of human habitation in that monotonous stretch of terrain was a number of drilling rigs that were squeaking and pounding, the harsh sound of their operating muted in the distance, the steam that poured from their exhausts looking like banks of snow against the drab background of leaden sky and sere countryside.

Some five hundred yards down the road, and separated from it by a narrow field of corn-stubble, the nearest standard cable tool drilling rig was puffing and thudding as its string of heavy tools ate downward toward the oil sand that lay some twelve hundred feet below the surface. Somewhere around that rig there might be—there probably was—a piece of leather. Possibly, even, there might be a generous driller or tool-dresser who would offer a sandwich or a slug of Java.

Tubby rose to his feet, and winced involuntarily as his stocky weight settled on that sore foot. As he went hobbling down the road, the impression of blocky strength that his body gave in repose was lost. His clothes hung loosely on his gaunt frame and his painful progress was a picture of utter dejection. His wide, full-lipped mouth was grimly set, his gray eyes were dull, and beneath his unruly mop of curly black hair his heavy brows were gathered into a scowl. From time to time, as if involuntarily, his hand lifted to touch the angry scar on his face. "Gotta find somethin' here!" he mut-

tered fiercely to himself. "Just gotta! Hope that driller an' his toolie are human sort o' cusses. Hate to do it, but I'll tell 'em all 'bout me, an' they'll gimme a- Huh! Now what!"

Followed by a cloud of loose small tools and a battered bucket, a disheveled, panicky figure had come racing from the

door of the drilling rig, now only two hundred feet away, and vaulted the rail fence within ten feet of where Tubby had come to a stand. Behind its flight a bull-voiced, angry driller sped that departure with profane bellowings.

"An' if yuh ever git clost enough ag'in f'r me to git my hands on yuh, I'll stuff yuh down a sewer hole, where yuh b'long," the infuriated driller added, turning back toward the churning tools.

"Yuh musta had an argument," Tubby ventured, stepping closer to the panting tool-dresser, who now leaned against the fence, dabbing at his bleeding nose with a bandanna handkerchief. "Sorta hard on the complexion, quittin' a job thataway, aint it?"

"The damn' surly bull!" the injured man said viciously. "Just 'cause he's big as a barn, an' tough as tool steel, he tries

to ride a guy. I'm done!"

"Kinda looks that way, so it does," Tubby gravely replied. "But, he-e-ey!" A quick light sprang into his eyes. "That guy'll be needin' a toolie now, won't he?''

"Yeah, an' he'll keep right on needin', as far's the toolies round this section're concerned. Ever'body knows Bull Maddox, round here, an'- Hey! Where

yuh goin', yuh fool?"
"Goin' up to see this here Bull guy," Tubby threw over his shoulder, limping

hurriedly toward the well.

IERE was possible opportunity. Pricked by ravenous hunger, Tubby had not missed the fact that in his flight the tool-dresser had left his dinner-pail behind him, and it was too early in the day for it to have been used. Perhaps, who knew, here was succor. . . .

"Hi, yuh!" As Tubby addressed the burly, scowling Bull Maddox, his mouth was curled in a friendly grin. "Looks like I'm just in time to nail a job," he

suggested. "How bout it?"

"Huh!" Bull's face was slowly returning to its normal beefy floridness as the purple of passion waned, but as his little, close-set blue eyes ran over Tubby's unkempt figure the irascible glint in their depths was pronounced. "A bum, eh?" he snorted contemptuously.

"Nope. Just a wanderin' tool-dresser, that's all."

"Most tool-dressers are wanderin'—in their mind," Bull retorted. Then, immensely pleased with his own bon mot, he unbent. "H-m-m! The hirin' on this lease is done by Pop Boyle, at Petrole-um Center," he said. "But if yuh wanta



finish this tower till midnight, or till Pop gets me another toolie out here, I'll take yuh on. Want it? —O. K.! Git busy! If yuh know what to do, me'n' you'll git along. If yuh don't, yuh'll prob'ly go down the road like that other

idjit just went."

"Yea-a-a-ah?" Tubby closed one eye, and surveyed the big driller through a single optic, then closed the other and did likewise. "Listen, Mister! Mebby yuh better let me get started, 'fore yuh begin drivin' me off. My dogs're so sore from walkin' that I wouldn't run easyan' yuh can't never tell what a guy'll do 'Sides when his dogs're too sore to run. which, I'm feelin' kinda weak an' low." Stepping toward the low anvil on which lay a dulled drilling-bitt, three feet long and eight inches in diameter at the swedged-out end, he grasped the tool with his thick-fingered hands, gave a quick heave, and lifted the heavy thing until its dulled end rested in the derrick forge. "I'll heat that's soon's I take a look at the boiler," he coolly announced, and limped from the rig toward the engine, where he had spotted the departed tool-dresser's dinner-pail and a pair of rubber boots. He didn't miss the fact that the big driller's eyes had widened a bit at his demonstration of strength, and he grinned ruefully to himself. The lifting of that bitt had been a gesture of bravado uncommon to his nature and a difficult thing—almost more than his spent strength could manage. But he hoped desperately, as he explored the dinner-pail with shaking fingers, that the exhibition might act as a temporary brake on the temper of the driller.

Twenty minutes later, with the gnawing pain in his mid-section somewhat dulled by the sandwich and coffee he had swallowed, and with his feet encased in the rubber boots, Tubby stood beside the forge and watched the flames leaping about the blacksmith's coal that he had piled around the cutting end of the heavy tool, while the automatic blower fanned the fire into a white heat. Tubby felt a bit uneasy. Out in the gas-fields, bitts were heated with gas, in a fire-clay oven. This thing of using coal, while the original method, was a little too old for Tubby. How the devil was a fellow to

know when the darn' thing was hot, all covered up there under a mound of blazing coal?

"Quit pokin' at that fire, an' let the

steel get hot."

Tubby turned and stared. Bull sat on the top step of the drilling stool, one arm moving up and down as his hand clutched the cross-arm of the feed-screw that rose and sank as the heavy walking beam overhead lifted and dropped the string of tools to a boulder six hundred feet below ground level. "I thought yuh was a tooldresser," Bull snarled. "Yuh never heated a bitt with coal before! Yuh used enough to heat a whole stem—an' didn't put no water on it. An' any dang' fool knows that the on'y place to open a coal fire is in the front corners."

fire is in the front corners."
"Much 'bliged." Tubby grinned. "I was just wonderin' 'bout that. Keep right on talkin', Mister. Mebby yuh'll say somethin' 'bout how a fella kin tell w'en the blame' coal has this thing—er—

cooked."

"Cooked? Cooked! I'll be damned if you aint the dumbest—" Bull started to descend from his stool. But as his feet touched the floor he stopped and stood staring toward the door of the derrick, through which a small old man had just entered, his gray chin-whiskers jutting pugnaciously. "'Lo, Pop!" Bull addressed the newcomer. "How're yuh

feelin' this-"

"How'm I feelin'? Y're askin' me, eh?" Pop Boyle, the big boss, lifted his gnarled old hands to his hips, and his chin-whiskers thrust toward the driller with a chip-on-the-shoulder cant. "I'm feelin' like tellin' yuh just what kind of a mean, ornery, mule-spirited mogul I think yuh are—that's how I'm feelin'. What d'yuh mean, chasin' y'r tool-dresser off'n the job 'thout first tellin' me what y'r grievance is? Who's this feller yuh got workin' here now, an' what business yuh got hirin' him? Shut up, dang yuh! I'm talkin'! Turn round here, young feller, an' lemme see y'r—He-e-e-ey! By the soul o' Drake! What d'yuh think y're doin'—fryin' spuds, or somethin'? Shut off that blower 'fore yuh burn the bitt plumb to ashes!"

DURING the peppery little man's arraignment of the big driller, Tubby had stood, his grinning face averted, beside the forge, entirely forgetful of the heating tool; but at the barked order he turned to the fire, and noted with quick consternation that bright little sparks

were shooting upward from the flames. Tubby didn't know much about heating steel with coal, but he did know the significance of those flying sparks—deep in the fire, the end of the bitt was burning into a honeycomb.

"Pull it out, dang it! Pull it outa there!" Pop shrilled, reaching for a ropering that would protect the hands while

moving the hot tool. "Hurry!"

FACED with the necessity of quick action, Tubby used the same method in taking the bitt from the forge that he had used in placing it in the fire. Grasping the steaming hot steel that lay free of the fire, he gave a quick heave, swung about, and dropped the tool to the anvil with a thud that shook the derrick.

"Huh! Well, it's out, anyhow," Pop grunted, his sharp eyes traveling searchingly to Tubby's face. "It's a helluva way to do it, but— Sa-a-ay, young feller! What's your name? Weren't you

workin'—''

"Name's Smith—John Smith," Tubby hastened to reply, "an' I aint never been there."

"Never been where?" Pop asked.

"Where yuh thought yuh seen me workin'," Tubby answered gravely. "It musta been some other guy. Honest!" His gray eyes held a deep appeal in their depths—an appeal that caused old Pop to snap his mouth shut on the indignant words he had been about to utter. The scowl left Pop's face, his chin-whiskers relaxed, and in place of the blasting words he had been about to speak, he merely cleared his throat loudly.

"Well, what're yuh waitin' on?" he demanded, swinging to face Bull. "Why'n't yuh help—ah—Smith to dress this bitt?"

Without a word of reply, Bull grasped one of the twenty-pound sledges that stood beside the forge. Striking left-handed, he brought the rounded nose of his sledge against the inner face of the bitt's upper bevel with a soft *thwat* that pulled the white-hot steel toward the outer edge. Tubby's sledge, swung right-handed, at once followed suit on the other side, and the two heavy hammers beat a steady *kat-lat*, *kat-lat*, *kat-lat* until the tool was sharpened and dropped into the slack-tub to temper.

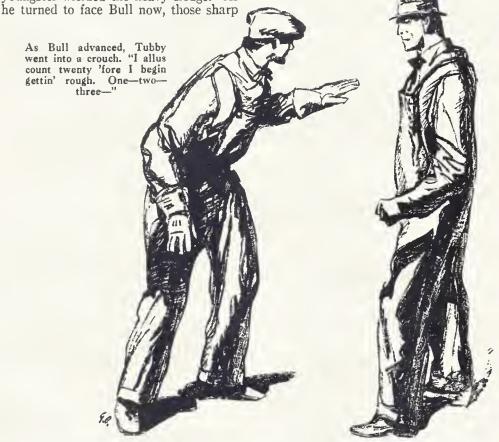
"This guy was just goin' by w'en I drove that worthless Cramer off'n the lease," Bull volunteered. "He said he was a toolie, an' I told him he could work till yuh brung me another'n', He aint much good though, Pop. Better

take him with yuh, an' send me one. Dang it, I want Spider Kent. I been tryin' to git him, f'r a month. Better let me have 'im."

"Yea-a-ah?" Pop's sharp blue eyes had gone speculative as he watched the two dress the bitt, and as he noted the smooth swing with which the blocky youngster wielded the heavy sledge. As

"Smith, eh?" Pop chortled to himself. "Dang me! Bull Maddox is either in for a s'prise party, or I am, or Smith! Dang it! I wonder— Anyhow, it's a good joke on Bull." Now as a class, oil-well drillers are

opinionated. Conscious that they have



eyes were hidden behind narrowed lids, and an unconscious smile twisted his lips. "Listen, Bull! Yuh been drivin' tool-dressers away until we aint got no extry ones left. Spider's workin' with Bill Cardeff, an' he's gonna stay there. Now, yuh vi'lated my rules, an' hired y'rself a toolie. Keep him! —Look here, Smith! This is your job, less'n yuh let that guy drive yuh off." Without waiting for any replies, Pop stamped out of the rig.

As he drove back toward town the old man chuckled inwardly, and his tough old heart rejoiced at the looks he had seen exchanged by Bull Maddox and "Smith"—the grim, inflexible purpose in Bull's face, the quick, determined fire that had flashed into the eyes of the new

tool-dresser:

learned their trade in a roughneck school, where only the fittest survive, they are jealous of their prerogatives. And tooldressers are aspiring drillers. But with all their perverse grouches, drillers can usually take a joke on themselves. Here Bull Maddox was an emphatic exception. Bull didn't believe in joking. And most emphatically Bull did not see himself, saddled with a hobo tool-dresser, as humorous. For, in addition to his natural cussedness, Bull had a complex—under the harsh, roaring exterior that he presented to the world, Bull owned a nature that was both fearful and superstitious.

On this particular well, Bull's inhibitions were raised to the graphic point, for Pop Boyle's Sparlan Valley lease was different from anything on which Bull had ever worked. Here, in drilling to the

vast oil-pools that underlaid the property, one encountered great pockets of natural gas, both above and in the oil In the drilling of ordinary oilwells, the operative takes his chances in using massive tools with portable equipment, and with the risks of breakage and overstrain. On wells where gas and oil are found together, he also takes his chances with the ever-imminent dangers of fire and explosion. When a gas pocket is tapped, its content immediately takes the course of least resistance—upward -and in that irresistible surge to an outlet, it usually carries with it the drillings from the bottom of the hole. If these drillings are flint-like sand, as is usually the case, the force of the eruption rasps the particles sharply against the steel tools or the metal casing of the hole. Heat is generated—often a flashing spark. In the case of the spark, instant combustion takes place in the gas. An explosion follows. If the gush of gas is sufficient—and no one can ever foretell the volume of the gush—that explosion will tear the drilling rig to matchwood and destroy those who man it. And if, in addition, the gas is saturated with oil, there flows a veritable fountain of spraying fire, igniting every burnable thing within the radius of its spout. The only possible precaution against such a holocaust is to have a crew on such wells—a tool-dresser and driller-who will work together as a prime unit of efficiency at the moment of need, each dependent upon the other for safety. Each man must know his duty, must perform it with speed and coordinated accuracy—otherwise chaos ensues.

HERE was one tool-dresser on the I Sparlan Valley lease with whom Bull felt safe: that was Spider Kent. The two had worked together on several wells on another lease. Fortune had smiled on While other crews were losing their wells, getting seriously burned, and in one case losing their lives, Bull and Spider had gone safely along. To Bull, Spider Kent was a talisman—but to Spider, Bull was a pain in the neck. when they moved to the Sparlan Valley lease, Spider saw to it that he was assigned to another driller, making his explanation confidentially to Pop Boyle. This left Bull in the unenviable position of an Indian snake-charmer who discovers, only after he is surrounded by a number of his vicious, deadly reptiles, that he has lost his little charm bag to whose beneficent influence he has always attributed his hypnotic powers.

Now, saddled with a tool-dresser whose abilities he distrusted, his tactics of driving away others whom he considered much better than Tubby having failed to produce Spider, Bull was face to face with a grim threat. Even now, the tools were biting down into the danger zone. He'd have to do something, and quickly, to eliminate Tubby. But even under the stress of desperate need he realized that his usual methods might fail with this blocky youngster whose scarred face and direct gray-eyed gaze lent him an appearance of stark abandon under strain, and whose physical strength had been demonstrated. Bull studied the stocky figure of Tubby for several minutes before launching his elimination campaign.

"MERE, you!" he finally called, taking the offensive. "Yuh snuck in here with a claim that yuh was a toolie. Yuh just know enough 'bout dressin' tools to think y're smart, but yuh won't do for me, see? Now save y'rself some trouble, an' git out."

"But yuh heard what the old party said," Tubby retorted. "He told me I had this job, less'n I left yuh drive me off. I reckon he means that yuh make a fellah work kinda hard. But I don't mind that-I'm willin' to work hard."

"Huh! Pop meant I don't put up with toolies that don't know their job," Bull explained, drawing his ugly face into its fiercest scowl. "Wen I git mad I can't control myself, an' I sometimes hurt my

toolies 'fore they kin git—"
"Tch! Tch! Tch!" Tubby interrupted. "Aint that just too bad! Bet yuh feel awful 'bout it, too. Y'know, I knew another fella once that couldn't control hisself, just like you say, an' 'fore he learnt to count twenty w'en he felt one of them mad attacks comin' on, another guy had to most kill him. Kinda tough medicine, that is, but I'll bet it'd cure yuh. Think mebby?"

"Sa-a-ay! Yuh aint suggestin' that you could mebby---"

"Nope. Not me." Tubby reached for one of the twenty-pound sledges and swung it back and forth in his right hand. "I aint suggestin' nothin'. I was just tellin' yuh 'bout that other fella." He eyed Bull's big form with frank speculation. "Take an awful lotta hammerin', I'll bet, to cure you thataway," he concluded, and grinned good-humoredly. "Yuh see, Mister, it's like this. My dogs're sore. An'

w'en I say sore, I mean *sore*. I can't run easy, an' I don't aim to hurt myself try-in'. So I just gotta talk biggity."

in'. So I just gotta talk biggity."
"Talk! Yeah. Barkin' dogs don't gener'ly bite much," Bull sneered, turn-

ing back to his tools.

"That's just what Slim Torrey usta say," Tubby commented, "an' he died of hyderphobia. Anyhow, that aint got nothin' to do with us—I reckon. I got me a job till I git run off, an' I can't run. So—"

He shrugged expressively, and added: "Yuh called me, a minute ago. What'd

vuh want?"

Bull squatted on the top step of his drilling stool and stared somberly down into the gray eyes of his interrogator. Indecision, mingled with an ill-suppressed rage, showed on his face. Finally he turned to the tools and loosened the set-screw of the feed-arm with a savage blow of his drilling-stick.

"Just this," he growled. "Wen I hired yuh, I told yuh the job'd be done at midnight. That's all. Wen we go off tower, y're done. Git outa here. I'll call yuh

w'en I need yuh."

"Thanks!" Tubby's mouth spread in his friendly smile. "Say! You don't act like a guy that can't control hisself."

For the rest of the tower Bull remained sullenly taciturn, and when, after they had been relieved by the crew that came on at midnight, he stamped to his car and drove off, he felt reasonably certain

he had seen the last of Tubby.

"Git y'r pay at the office, in the mornin'," he told the stocky youngster, paying no attention to the latter's evident desire to ride with him. "It's on'y twelve miles, an' the walk'll do yuh good. Yuh been loafin' all day." He drove off, chuckling to himself at the crestfallen look that had swept over Tubby's face.

ON the following morning, however, when Bull went to the office with his previous tower's drilling report, he changed his mind about Tubby's elimination. Pop Boyle shoved the report aside, and loved at him through carefully cur-

tained eyes.

"Got a phone call from y'r new tooldresser, a few minutes ago, Bull," Pop told him. "Kind of a dirty trick yuh pulled, drivin' off that way an' leavin' him to hoof it to the nearest farmhouse, wasn't it? It's lucky for—ah—Smith that it was on'y two miles, an' that them folks was willin' to take him in to board."

"I fired him," Bull announced. "Told him to come in this mornin' an' git his pay for nine hours. I want Spider. I'll take him out along. Had a talk with him, last night, an' he's willin' to go."

"Whoa!" Pop's eyes flashed. "I told

"Whoa!" Pop's eyes flashed. "I told yuh yesterday that we weren't givin' yuh Spider Kent, an' I told the guy yuh hired that he could stay till yuh run him off. Look here, Bull—cut out y'r blasted meanness, or somebody'll bend a jackhandle over y'r head, one o' these days. Smith'll be waitin' to go on tower with yuh w'en yuh git out to the well. It aint your business to fire him, an' don't expect me to fire him less'n he don't do his work."

"That's just it," Bull retorted. "He aint no tool-dresser. He's just a blasted burn that's bluffin' 'bout—"

POP jerked forward. "What'd yuh hire him for, then?"

"I on'y hired him for yesterday-till

midnight."

"Yah! If he was good enough f'r yesterday, why aint he good enough for today? I watched him pullin' steel with yuh. He knows his way around, all right."

"Aw, he didn't even know how to heat a bitt," Bull insisted, "an' he's just like that with a lotta things. He's on'y half smart—an' I need a whole-way smart one

out there."

"Yuh aint never seen a whole-way smart toolie yet, have yuh, Bull?" Pop

interrupted.

"Yeah—Spider Kent. We're apt to hit gas any minute," Bull said. "How much chance has a driller got to bring in a well where there's gas, less'n he's got a toolie that knows his stuff?"

Pop's old eyes twinkled. "How does ever'body else do it?" he asked bluntly. Then, "So y're 'fraid mebby he won't know what to do if yuh hit a gas-blow, eh? S'pose y'd hit it yesterday? Lemme tell yuh somethin', Bull," he began. Then he stopped. The twinkle left his eyes and his chin-whiskers thrust out. "It's no use talkin'!" he shrilled. "Yuh don't get Spider Kent. Yuh hired that other feller—now keep him!"

When Bull arrived at the well, two hours later, he found Tubby already there, waiting for him. Returning only a black scowl for the wide grin Tubby flashed at him, Bull snarled a curt acknowledgment to the relief-driller's comments on the past tower, and crawled to his perch on the stool, where he sat hunched in sullen



With a bellow of rage and fear, Bull charged for the door. As he went through it, he caught Pop Boyle about the waist and bore him, kicking and swearing, into the open.

silence. Deep in his heart Bull recognized the justice in what Pop Boyle had told him about himself and his meanness, and that justice rankled. He felt depressed. To be saddled with a tool-dresser he didn't want was bad, but to have it put flatly to him that he had to keep that tool-dresser until he ran him off by physical force made Bull squirm within—for at the core of his being he knew himself to be a bit afraid of Tubby. But he'd have to do something—and soon!

"Hey, you!" Bull raised his voice in a bellow. A sudden determination had come to him. And as Tubby came hurrying from the boiler Bull sat studying him

through antagonistic eyes.

"Look here, fella," he finally began. "I fired yuh, an' yuh went over my head to hold y'r job. All right. Now, I'm gonna tell yuh somethin'. This here field's dangerous, an' this well's soon comin' in. I aint gonna tell yuh a dang' thing to do w'en it does blow, an' I aint gonna show yuh nothin'. If yuh git y'rself killed, or mebby toasted like a hunk of bread, don't blame me. Now, if yuh know what's comin', an' stay, I aint got nothin' more to say. But if yuh take my advice yuh'll beat it—even if y'r feet do hurt—"

"Oh, yeah?" Tubby's own face had gone hard; a quick fire had blazed in his gray eyes. "You talk too much," he said. "Specially that part about not showin' me nothin'. That proves yuh aint on the level, an' I—"

At the charge Bull leaped to the floor, fists clenched and eyes burning hotly. His face was set, and his lips were quivering away from his teeth in a snarl. As Bull advanced, Tubby's squat body went into a crouch, but he backed away, talking as he moved. "Let me tell yuh, wild man: I'm the guy that come damn' near gettin' killed 'fore I learned to control my temper!" One hand rose instinctively to the red scar. "Now, I allus count twenty 'fore I begin gettin' rough: One—two—three—"

Bull, feeling himself being baited, started a sudden rush, but Tubby leaped lightly away, and went on counting: "Four—five— Come right along, Mister Bull; I don't hafta count in ones! Six—eight—ten—fifteen—twe— Uh-huh! I kinda figgered you'd wise up."

Bull stood still and relaxed. It had become clear to him that he had mistaken the tactics to be used with this toolie. He ought to have caught him a clout unawares and thrown him into the road unconscious. He had been a fool—with his warnings. But he knew that nothing was to be gained by further attack now. He wasn't afraid of the barehanded Tubby, but he saw that the hobo might run him ragged in a fight, and still not be driven off the lease.

"Listen!" Tubby was saying. "I gotta have a job, fella, an' I'm hangir' on to this'n. I'll do my work; you do your'n. I guess it's as dangerous for you round here, as 'tis for me. But if anything goes wrong, 'member what I'm tellin' yuh—you do your work, an' don't worry 'bout

me.'

URING the next ten days speculation became rife among the drillers, the tool-dressers, the roustabouts of the casing and pipe-line crews of the vast lease on which Tubby and Bull were drilling this remote well. There was no doubt in the mind of any lease employee that Bull Maddox would eventually tear loose on one of his wild benders, and that Tubby would be added to the long list of casualties. So among themselves they made small bets on the precise duration of Tubby's employment. Firmly convinced that his tenure on the Sparlan Valley lease was to be short, they didn't bother to cultivate his society—which put Tubby in the same position as a missionary in a cannibal tribe: He was passively endured for the sake of future entertainment. And Tubby, a normal human being, with all a normal man's desire for companionship, felt the attitude of the gangs, resented it, and in his resentment exhibited a species of dogged sullenness toward all.

Each time Bull and his toolie came off tower, the other crews looked searchingly at them, hunting for marks of trouble, signs of the inevitable rift. But there were no marks or signs. And when the young fellow had lasted two weeks, the crews, grown restive at the long delay, decided to push things a little.

"LOOK here, buddy," Spider Kent told Tubby, one morning when the latter came to Petroleum Center with the farmer at whose home he boarded. "Bull's gettin' ready to start trouble for yuh; I c'n see it in his eye. Better beat it, 'fore yuh get plumb killed." Spider was a lean, hatchet-faced toolie, whose main topics of conversation centered around "they say" and "I've heard." As he talked to Tubby now, his little eyes kept darting down the street to where the sour-visaged Grease Berger was talking to Bull Maddox.

"Yeah?" Tubby snapped in reply to

"Yeah?" Tubby snapped in reply to Spider's advice. "Yuh see a lot of things in folks' eyes, don't yuh? Reg'lar eyedoctor, aint yuh? Look in mine, an' see can yuh tell what I think of eye-doctors"

ors."

Meanwhile, down the street, Grease

had accosted Bull Maddox.

"Yuh better get shut o' that hobo toolie, Bull," Grease advised confidentially. "They say he's been shootin' off his face 'bout how he had yuh bluffed, an'—"

"Yeah? An' I s'pose yuh b'lieve it!"

Bull snarled. All the pent-up rage that two weeks of repression had built in him came rushing up like gas from a tapped well. "Well, yuh kin tell 'em they're wrong!"

His hairy fist lashed out and caught Grease flush on the jaw, and that human jackdaw folded up like an accordion.

With fists doubled, Bull stood over the astounded Grease, and declared in no uncertain terms that he was ready, then and now, to produce the same effect for any other person or persons who might desire a little exercise. Then with no takers of his offer appearing, and with his steam somewhat exhausted, he strode up the street, past gaping storekeepers, passed Tubby and Spider with a snort, and clumped his ponderous way into a restaurant.

OUT at the well, that afternoon, Tubby was thoughtful. Time and again his gray eyes, that held a friendly twinkle in their cool depths, turned toward the powerful driller, squatted on the drilling stool. Several times he seemed on the point of speech, but changed his mind. Finally he could control himself no longer.

"Bet that guy yuh slugged wishes he'd counted twenty 'fore he started that argument with yuh, Bull," he ventured. "Yuh sure did get 'em all told, ol'-timer."

"Yeah, an' it went f'r everybody," Bull retorted. "It meant you an' Spider Kent,

same as ever'body else!"

"Um-hm! I kinda reckoned so." Tubby mused for a minute. "Say, Bull, I got a notion Spider was tellin' me the same thing 'bout you as Grease told you 'bout me. Reg'lar little Pollyanners, them two, aint they?"

"H-m-m-m!" The vertical lines between Bull's eyes grew deep under the stress of mental concentration, and the eyes themselves took on a far-away look. "Yeah, I guess mebby y're right, kid. Git the hell outa here—w'en I want yuh I'll call yuh; I aint got no time to be gassin'. This hole's dang' close to—'Lo, Pop!" he broke off to address the little lease-owner, who at that moment appeared on the drilling floor. "How're yuh feelin' this—"

"How'm I feelin'?" Pop shrilled. "I'll tell yuh how I'm feelin'—I'm feelin' like fillin' yuh with a load of buckshot, that's how I'm feelin'! What d'yuh mean, sluggin' Grease Berger 'thout no reason? Dang me, Bull! Yuh'll git me mad yet.

By the soul o' Drake, yuh will!"

"Aw, he had it comin' to him, Pop," Bull defended himself. "He come to me with a line of talk that invited—" Bull stopped, and his face purpled.

"Â line that invited what?" Pop demanded. "What'd he say? Dang it!

What'd he do?"

"Oh, nothin'!" Bull's face drew into a sullen mask, and he turned to the tools. "Nothin', eh?" Pop's voice rose in a

triumphant cackle. "I knowed it! It's just y'r dang' ornery—"

Pop went silent. The entire rig had suddenly vibrated and swayed, as if from the effects of an earthquake. The giant walking-beam threshed up and down in a few ponderous, thudding strokes, then snapped hard against the "headache" post beneath it with a jar that threatened to demolish the rig. From the drilling hole came a shrieking crescendo of sound, and with it came a haze of oil, stinking with its compression of centuries. was so finely atomized by the terrific gas-pressure behind it that it looked like a mist—a gas-pressure so great that as the pounding tools opened the pool in which it lay, the force of its escape was sufficient to blow the ton of steel that comprised the stem and bitt clear of the bottom.

"The tools! The tools! Get 'em outa there! Steam! Steam! Get a steam jet workin' in that hole!" Pop's voice, high-pitched in the excitement, could scarcely be heard through the shrill whistle of oil-laden gas that gushed up around the tools in a mammoth, stinging fountain, but almost immediately the hissing shriek of steam added its noise to the roar of the well, showing that Tubby had opened the steam valve that shot moisture into the hole—it was a precaution which might avert fire. And now, Tubby Morrison came charging into the well. Bull Maddox had leaped to free the cable from the wrecked walking-beam, so that the giant bull wheels might spool it up and drag the tools to the surface-but, blinded by the oil that filled his eyes, he lurched away.

"Hurry! Hurry!" Pop was dancing about, just inside the door to the drilling floor, wiping at his own eyes, and shouting at the top of his voice. "Get them tools out! Hurry up, 'fore she gathers head, an' the sand starts spoutin'."

IT was a dangerous moment, and from experience Pop knew the danger. The spray of sand might appear at any instant, pouring from the hole, mixed with the reek of oil and gas, bringing the dangerous rasp against steel that might set a spark—the steam jet might, or it might not, keep that spark from igniting the gas—geysers of flaming oil and torches of riven, oil-soaked derrick timbers would go hurtling through the air in a hellish spout, a menace to the whole valuable tract—a holocaust.

As Tubby came leaping into the derrick, Bull Maddox acted as he had determined to act when refused the help of Spider Kent. Pop Boyle had insisted on keeping this hobo toolie on the job. Now let Pop see what it meant to have an inexperienced man in a dangerous rig! With a bellow of combined fear and rage, Bull charged for the door. As he went through it, he caught Pop Boyle about the waist, and bore him, kicking and swearing, into the open.

To Tubby, as he stood in the wildly I swaying derrick, the situation was at once stark and charged with an exhilaration that was inspiring—stark in that he realized the menace of the moment, inspiring because he saw the departure of Pop and Bull and realized that any saving action depended entirely on him. Buffeted and drenched by the blasting oil haze, almost choked by the noisome gas, he fought his way to the tools and disconnected the feed-screw from the Then, gasping for breath, he jumped for the transmission cable from the engine, and threw it across the bull wheel "grabs." Now he leaped for the engine controls, and a second later the bull wheels began to turn. There was a sickening, lurching jar as the cable slack was taken up, and then, as the powerful engine's exhaust rose to a thunderous roar, the tools commenced their rise from the bottom.

Meantime, Pop Boyle and Bull Maddox, choking and retching, blinded by the stinging oil, and driven by the all-powerful urge of sheer self-preservation, reached a spot of comparative safety. Through eyes that smarted and burned as though from the lick of actual flame, they stood in the clear air, gulping in

deep breaths.

And so they suffered and struggled for two long minutes, while the cable spun its deliberate upward way, while Tubby stood alone in the bluish haze of the derrick, his hand on the engine control. Before his face he had put up an elbow to guard his eyes from the gouts of oil that sprayed him, plastering his overalls to his body and running from his shoulders in viscous streams.

Pop Boyle finally broke the tension. "Come out o' there! Let 'er go! Come out!" His shrill voice rose against the crescendo of the well and the staccato bark of the racing engine. And Bull Maddox took up the refrain:

"Come out, kid! C'mon out!"

FOR a moment Tubby's arm flashed a wide gesture of denunciation, of dismissal. The derrick shook and throbbed. The dripping cable crawled from the hole in agonizingly slow sections. The gush of oil, gathering to a head in the cavity from which the tools were being withdrawn, increased in density. It was now only a matter perhaps of seconds, before the gathering head would cause a momentary cessation of flow, then spew forth in a Gargantuan gush, carrying with it the sand drillings laden with danger. Still Tubby remained in the rig.

ger. Still Tubby remained in the rig.
Actuated by a single impulse, Pop
Boyle and Bull Maddox moved into action. Pop turned and dashed for the
boiler, where he might maintain a rousing
fire and keep the steam pouring into the
hole. Bull, his face grimly set, swung
straight into the mist of oil with long,
purposeful strides. Tubby, noting the
driller's coming, stepped aside to give
Bull his place at the controls. But Bull
shook a restraining hand at him, leaped
across the floor, and grasped the bullwheel brake, ready to catch the tools
when Tubby brought them clear—the
position Bull had always deemed secondary in the rig, and had delegated to his
tool-dresser.

And so they stood for a long minute—two, three—Tubby erect at the controls, Bull crouched with gleaming, watchful eyes at the brake, Pop standing tensely at the boiler. Then, as the long, glinting shaft of the drill stem rose into view and swung clear, Bull caught the tools with his brake. Tubby sprang away from the controls. Diving into a corner of the rig, he snatched a heavy rope mat and darted back to the stem. A minute later the mat descended over the hole, with the weight of the tools above it, and the danger of spouting sand was past.

Tubby Morrison stepped to the edge of the drilling rig, and descended with a squish to the sodden ground outside. Ten feet ahead of him, Bull Maddox strode heavily toward Pop Boyle, who stood waiting near the boiler, one thin hand

clenched at his side, the other clawing at his oil-saturated, grimy chin-whiskers.

"Now!" Pop cackled as the big driller approached. "Now what d'yuh think of y'r tool-dresser? Eh? I know 'im—knowed 'im the minute I laid my eyes on 'im. Name's Tubby Morrison, an' he got dang' near killed, a few months back, for gettin' rough with his tool-dressers, out in the big gas-fields. He tried to run two off at oncet. Thought you was tough an' smart, didn't yuh? W'y, yuh big, ornery—"

"Aw, lay off me, Pop!" Bull's shoulders hunched, and he scowled fiercely. "It's y'r own blasted fault. Why'n't yuh tell me the guy knowed his business? The way he handled them tools—"

"Yah! Yah! Why didn't somebody tell yuh somethin'!" Pop shrilled mockingly. "When did anything anybody ever told yuh, take? Yah! I'll betcha yuh didn't even learn good sense from this."

The big driller's mouth twisted in a sheepish grin. One huge hand reached out and settled on Pop's thin shoulder. "Yeah, I reckon I did, Pop. I reckon

I learned somethin', all right," he said. "So-o-o?" A look of quick understanding blazed in Pop's old eyes, and one wrinkled hand came up to rest on the driller's brawny arm. "What'd yuh learn, Bull? Tell me."

SLOWLY Bull swung the slight old man about until he faced the spot where Tubby sat, studiously examining the oil-soaked sole of a new shoe that he had removed from his foot.

"One—two—three—four—" Bull began to count slowly, and Tubby looked up with a delighted grin.

"Ten—fifteen—twenty," he finished.
"I knowed yuh wasn't one of them guys that couldn't control hisself. Heck!
Once I was worse'n' you ever was—wasn't I, Pop? An' I—"

"Pull y'r fire!" Bull interrupted, snapping back into a semblance of his old form. "I'll give yuh a hand. C'mon! Hurry! I'll drop yuh at y'r boardin'-house on my way to town after the casin' gang. Yuh'll be wantin' to change y'r clothes, mebby. C'mon, dang it! What're yuh waitin' on, anyhow? One—two—three—four—"

Pop Boyle broke into a hearty laugh as the two stared gravely at each other, as if measuring forces, then turned and walked together, in sodden squashiness, toward the boiler.

EACH of us has had at least one crowded hour of excitement in his life that is well worth telling about. Here five of your fellow-readers relate their most interesting adventures. If you would like to try your hand at this Real Experience contest, read the detailed notice appearing on Page 3.

The Dame

By ADELAIDE BICKNELL

LIVED in San Diego, California, for two years right after the World War was over. The two things I remember most vividly about my stay there, are: the very annoying rule the market had of not delivering purchases amounting to less than \$10.00; and the young naval men one saw there—gobs, marines, captains and even admirals; but the really peerless sight was a lieutenant on shore leave. The reason why this non-delivery rule of the markets, and the pluperfect lieutenants are bracketed together in my memories of San Diego, will appear.

None of those well-known characters famous for sartorial splendor, Solomon in all his glory, the Queen of Sheba, the lilies of the field, or who have youcould equal one of those boys, done up in white duck, with the gold braid and touches of navy blue, for relief. And manner! A skillful blending of haughty reserve, ennui, sophistication, overlaid with a thick coating of noblesse oblige.

I stopped one afternoon on my way home from a sight-seeing trip at one of the large markets just outside the business district. These places had an uncanny fascination for me, and I invariably bought too many things. This time, as usual, I started home carrying a number of packages—one of them a dozen eggs in a flimsy paper sack. The streetcar I must take had already come some distance from the starting-point downtown. It was nearly five o'clock, and the cars were crowded. I let two pass, when one came that seemed possible, and I signaled. There were three ordinary sailors, or "gobs," on the back platform. With the aid of the conductor and one of these, I got aboard without dropping anything. The only empty seat was beside a naval lieutenant a few rows up in the car. As I made my uncertain way toward it, the lieutenant arose and stood in the aisle.

He certainly was a gorgeous sight not a flaw anywhere. He hadn't looked at me, nor given the least indication that

he was aware of my existence, but had merely risen and stepped into the aisle; and I—quite naturally, I still maintain —supposed he was getting off the car, and was merely waiting for me to be seated so as not to pass me in the narrow aisle. I dropped into the seat and slid over next to the window. My arms ached from carrying the packages; My first move was to put the sack of eggs on the vacant seat beside me and start to arrange the other things more comfortably. At that instant I saw out of the corner of my eye, something white coming down.

Horrors! It was the lieutenant: He had merely risen to give me the seat next the window, and now he was sitting down on those eggs. I made a queer noise—a mixture of shriek and gurgle and grabbed for the eggs, but I was too late. The lieutenant sat down-not only on the eggs, the whole dozen of them, but on my hand as well, flattening it down in the eggs. I pulled my hand out, smeared and dripping with egg. Holding it clasped to my bosom, I gave vent meanwhile to queer gasps, and squeaks.

The lieutenant looked at me in amazement, and exclaimed: "Madam, what in God's name ails you?" Then he caught sight of my hand, still clutching my bosom and dripping slimy streaks of egg. I suppose moisture from the crushed eggs began to soak through at the same instant, for a look of unbelieving horror spread over his face. He rose slowly to his feet and put one hand around to the seat of his trousers. It came back daubed with egg.

By that time everybody in the car was aware that something was going on. Those in the seats farthest away were standing or craning their necks to see. The three gobs from the back platform had crowded inside, and the conductor

was following.

REAL EX-

with the Eggs

Wherein an innocent and polite young naval officer is sacrificed to make a joyous quarter-hour for you.

The lieutenant, refusing to believe the evidence on his hand, was twisting his head over his shoulder in a desperate effort to see the seat of his trousers. Not quite making it, he twisted farther—at the same time trying to pull his pants around so he could see—his head chasing his seat around like a puppy and his tail. Some woman let out a strangled snicker; then the whole crowd burst into laughter. Roars, shrieks, whoops and howls! Everybody but the lieutenant and I. The motorman had stopped the car in the middle of the block and now he came in to see what the fun was.

The lieutenant suddenly seemed to realize what was going on around him. With one murderous look about, he shot for the back door. As he reached the three gobs, who were pounding each other on the back and whooping like lunatics, they snapped to sudden and faultless salute. He paused long enough to use some language to them that should have singed their eyebrows, but never brought the flicker of a muscle from any of the three; then he dived off the car—and made for the nearest shelter, a hot-dog stand, at a lope.

Gradually the hubbub subsided and the car started on. I got off a few blocks farther on. All three of the gobs carefully and solicitously assisted me and my packages off the car, and one of them said: "Madam, if you will give us your name and address, the boys would just love to send you a case of eggs."

By going up the alley and into the back door, I managed to get up to my room without being seen. I cleaned the egg off my hands and hid the dress. I hoped fervently that none of my family would ever hear of my escapade.

That evening I slipped into the unlighted living-room to get the evening paper. There was as usual a gang of young people on the adjoining sun-



porch. A man's voice was telling a story that was causing hilarious amusement. Something caused me to creep to the window and peek out. Sure enough, it was one of the three gobs who had been on the street-car, the one who had told me the boys would like to send me a case of eggs. With vivid and dramatic fluency he was describing the scene on the street-car. He referred to me throughout as "The dame with the eggs."

MANY times I had argued with my daughters that well-brought-up girls saw to it their company was brought in and introduced to their parents; but they said that things had changed since my day, and girls who had to have their boy friends O.K.'d by Papa and Mamma wouldn't have any boy friends to O.K. Now I was fervently thankful things had changed! I went upstairs and stayed there. Later I heard them in the livingroom dancing to the music of the piano and a ukulele.

Next morning Gladys wanted omelet for breakfast. I told her I had forgotten to get eggs. That reminded them of the sailor one of the boys had brought with him the evening before, and the story he had told of the lieutenant and the eggs.

As usual they disagreed, Gladys insisting the sailor was a "cute kid" and the story a killingly funny one—Aileen

maintaining he was a "roughneck," and there was nothing funny about the story. "This sailor-Steve Keller, his name isfell for your picture, Mamma," said Gladys.

"What picture?" I asked weakly.

"Why, the new one on the pianothat's the only one there is. He asked who it was, and he looked and looked at

"Yes-and he looked as if he was just dying to laugh about something, too,"

contributed Aileen.

I was just used up. It did seem strange that with all the hundreds of sailors there were, and the dozens of homes open to them, that that one had

to pick out mine to come to!

Next forenoon while the girls were both at their jobs, a truck from one of the chicken-ranches in East San Diego delivered a case of their excellent eggs at my house! I told the driver there was some mistake, but he had the written order, and the receipted bill—there was a card with my name, and address, and "For value received" written on it. Before the girls came home, I had disposed of a third of the case, to the neighbors on each side of me, and had the rest safely stored away. And the next day the cruiser those three sailors belonged on left port—so that was that.

But the incident was not quite closed. At the time all this happened, I was in the midst of a thorough house-cleaning —I had insisted that by taking my time, I could easily get along without hiring help. As usual, I overworked. Sunday morning I stayed in bed, and the girls got the breakfast. Gladys brought me coffee and toast, and Aileen a lovely omelet on a nice hot plate. At no time had I felt like laughing at what occurred on the street-car, for I was mortified and distressed; but that yellow omelet on the white plate reminded me irresistibly of the egg on the seat of the lieutenant's trousers, and for some queer reason it now seemed funny. I began to laugh and couldn't stop—I laughed louder; I shrieked, and cried and laughed and hiccoughed all at once; and by that time the doctor was there.

He slapped my face smartly with a towel dipped in ice-water, and told me

to shut up. I finally stopped.

They decided I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown from overwork, so I was sent up to Descanso for a week's rest-proving that the way of the transgressor is not always hard.

Voyage of

By CAPTAIN GEORGE H. GRANT

II - THE RUNAWAY

7 TEARIED by a day of backbreaking toil, and to escape for a time from the barking of the mate Mr. Boxley's voice, it seemed best to me, as I washed the coal-grime from my face after supper, to change into my shore-going uniform with its brass buttons and visit the town of Cardiff, so that I might have something pleasant to think about should the days at sea drag along like a vessel whose bottom is fouled with barnacles and grass.

Jamie—the youngest of the four cadets aboard the Monarch; he was only fifteen —was in the half-deck, curled up on the settee with his chin resting on his knees; and I asked him to accompany me. He shook his head. He was too tired, he declared, to move a step. And well he might be, I thought, for ever since early morning when the Monarch had been towed through the dock-gates to her berth under the coal-tip, he had been on his feet lending a hand at a thousandand-one jobs which were all strange to him. And he was a frail lad, unfitted by physique and temperament to the hard life of the sea. His mother was dead; and his father, it would seem, had shipped him off to sea to get rid of him.

It was out of the question to invite either Ernie or Spifkins, the other two cadets. After working all day, they were on duty for the night. So I went alone. For sixpence I obtained a seat in the pit of the Empire, a music-hall, and I laughed until my sides were aching at the grotesque antics of a comedian who wore a sailor's suit and carried a parrot in a

Midnight boomed on the pier-head clock when I passed up the gangway and ascended on tiptoe, for fear of waking Captain McFarlane, to the flyingbridge—from where, across the wharf, I could see the dark waters of the Bristol Channel flowing restlessly, with many leaping whitecaps, toward the open sea.

the Monarch

In "On a Lee Shore" last month Captain Grant told you of the stormy start of this adventurous voyage. Here he carries on his memorable and authentic story of deep-seafaring.

I descended from the flying-bridge and made my way aft to the starboard half-deck. It was in darkness. When I lighted the lamp, I saw that Jamie was not in his bunk, that it had not been slept in. Wondering where he could be, I glanced around. His working-clothes, in which I had last seen him, were on the settee, and on top of them lay a white sheet of paper. Apprehensively picking it up, I held it behind the smoking bulkhead lamp. On it was printed in large wavering letters:

I HAVE RUN AWAY

For a moment I was dumfounded. The confidence of the flying-bridge oozed away, leaving a wabbling hollow in the pit of my stomach. It seemed so incredible that he should have taken such a course. It wasn't done, I muttered to myself; a boy must always take his medicine like a man, never turn his back on a job, or run away from a danger. Then I thought of Jamie, of his pale face and his frightened eyes, and I realized that he hadn't been long enough at sea to feel the deck firm under his feet.

Quickly passing to the deck, I entered the port half-deck and thumped on the bulkhead. Ernie and Spifkins sat up in their bunks, and drowsily demanded what all the noise was about.

manded what all the noise was about.

"Jamie has run away," I told them.

"Get up. We've got to find him."

"Go and take a running jump out of yourself," Ernie shouted. "We've been working all evening and we're going to sleep."

He flopped back on his pillow. I grasped one of his feet and pulled it over the bunk-board, pressing it down until he yelled with pain.

"Get up and get out of it, or I'll lick the stuffing out of both of you," I said threateningly. "Jamie's gone, and we've got to find him before old Boxley comes on deck. He'll skin us all alive if



he ever hears a whisper of it, and you both know that. Now get up and get out of it!"

Grumbling like two old shellbacks who have been called out in the dogwatch to sweep down the bridge, they tumbled out of their bunks and pulled their overcoats on over their working-clothes, in which they had been sleeping, and followed me along the deck. Old Davy, the night-watchman, was standing by the gangway trimming the hurricane-lamp, which hung at the inboard end. We halted beside him, and I asked:

"Have you seen anything of Jamie? You know, the little chap who was making his first voyage?"

Old Davy passed a hand over his mouth and down his beard, as if drawing his thoughts up out of his boots; then he looked at each of us in turn with an exasperating slowness.

"'E was mopin' around 'ere like a lovesick coon 'bout an hour ago," he told us; "but I haint seen 'im since."

DAVY was a garrulous old josser, and would have detained us further; but linking my arms through Ernie's and Spifkins', I hurried them down the gangway and along the wharf. I wanted to get clear of the vessel before our absence could be discovered. Not until we were outside the pier-head gates did we pause for breath. Standing in the shelter of the Board of Trade building, I faced the others.

"If he ran away within an hour, he can't have gone far," I said, "for the last tramcar left here for the center when I was coming back on board. He must be walking. We'd better each search in a different direction. You go toward Penarth, Ernie. It's not a bad road. I

walked it the night the sailors burned the Chinamen's dunnage. You take Bute Road, Spifkins, and head for the town. I'll search the back-streets of Tiger Bay. My legs are the longest, and I can run the fastest if chased." I glanced up at the clock over the pier-head. It was on the stroke of one. "Whoever finds Jamie, bring him here and wait for the others until four. We'll meet at that time and go on board together be-

fore old Boxley gets up.'

They protested, declaring that I was sending them on a wild-goose chase, but I waved their arguments to one side and ordered them to get going. Very reluctantly they set off. I watched till they had disappeared; then I plunged toward the dark alleys of Tiger Bay with my heart in my mouth. But as I trudged along, peering into doorways in the hope of finding Jamie lying asleep on the hard cold slabs of stone, I was frightened only by the loneliness and by the knowledge that my quest was all in vain.

It was three when I reached the town. My legs were aching, and I wanted to sit down on the curb. But I thought perhaps the others had found Jamie, and hopefully I turned in my tracks and set

off along Bute Road.

I had gone about halfway toward the pier-head when a woman stepped from a dark entry to confront me. The darkness hid her face, but her eyes were inordinately bright and I backed away. She reached out and grasped my arm.

"Where are you headin' for, Jack?"

she asked in a harsh whisper.

"I'm looking for a boy—one of the boys from the ship," I blurted out. "His name's Jamie. He's lost!"

She laughed, and it hurt me. An odor of whisky brushed across my nostrils, and I felt sick. I broke from her grasp, to run away blindly. Suddenly I met Spifkins sauntering slowly toward the pier-head, and I slackened my pace. He swung into a trot beside me. After a while he asked: "You didn't find him, did you, Tommy?"
"No," I answered.

"Neither did I," said he. "It's disappointing, isn't it? Almost enough to make a man cry."

ERNIE waited alone in the shelter of the Board of Trade building. He had been five miles out along the road, he declared, and was dead tired. His tone conveyed the impression to me that he wanted to get back on board. So did

 It did not seem to matter much that Jamie was lost. More than anything I desired the safety of the vessel, and the clean smell of the sea.

"Let's go," I said.

Mr. Boxley came from the galley as we crept up the gangway. He wore his oilskin coat and his sea-boots, and he drank from a mug of steaming hot tea. "Come here!" he bellowed.

We moved timidly toward him.

"Where have you been? Who gave you permission to go ashore?" he demanded. When we did not answer, he went on: "The loading has been held up an hour because you weren't on hand to issue candles and shift the ship. You'll work all day for this."

I stepped forward. "But sir," I cried, "it was all my fault. Jamie's run away, and I took Ernie and Spifkins with me to

look for him."

He wrestled with the matter for a time. Suddenly his head shot up as though released by a spring. "So! He's run away?" said he. "And the ship's neglected because of him!" He pursed his lips, and his brows came down in a frown as he mused over the thought. Very deliberately he fixed his gaze on me, and he said: "You've been long enough at sea to know that the ship always comes first. Men can be broken and killed so that she may survive; yet you desert her and go in search of a child! Your brains are in your feet! Bah! Get some tea and be ready to turn to in half an hour. There's work to be done."

Never did boys put in such a day of toil! After breakfast we hoisted on board, and carried to the various lockers, all the stores for a six-months' voyage. For the deck department there were barrels of oil, bales of waste, drums of paint, and sundry small articles such as chipping hammers, scrapers, brushes and coils of rope; for the steward we struggled with sacks of flour, barrels of sugar, cases of biscuits, meat and fruit, and loose tins of sardines, some of which we purloined and ate in the shelter of the fiddley when Mr. Boxley had gone to his cabin for a smoke; and for the chief engineer, who was a grumpy old codger with white whiskers like Santa Claus, we fetched on board barrels of lubricating-oil and tubs of grease, to be surprisingly thanked by the gift of some bars of chocolate.

By noon we were half-dead with fatigue. But there was no let-up in the round of toil. The sailor-men came on

board drunk; and after leading them to the forecastle, we were out on deck again preparing the *Monarch* for sea.

Captain McFarlane, who had been ashore on business since morning, arrived on board as the tugs came alongside to

tow the Monarch out to sea.

Walking to the break of the forward-house, he asked Mr. Boxley, who was conversing with the pilot, if Jamie had been brought back. When Mr. Boxley answered no, he entered the saloon.

T was at that moment I saw Jamie on the wharf. He came from behind the coal-tip, huddled under his overcoat as if it were ten sizes too large for him, with a woman on one side of him and a policeman on the other. I recognized the woman, and my heart leaped into my mouth. A thousand bewildering thoughts crowded into my head; then one came uppermost: what would Mr. Boxley think? I looked around quickly to see where he was, for I was afraid of what he might do before Jamie could gain the protection of Captain McFarlane. He had left the pilot and gone aft to his cabin. I sighed with relief and swung toward Spifkins, who was clearing away a fall behind me.

"Here! Take this!" I shouted. "You and Ernie get the derricks down. I'll be

back as soon as I can."

Pushing the fall into his hands, I raced along the deck to reach the gangway as Jamie and his companions came aboard.

"This way!" I cried, before one of

them could speak.

I led them up onto the lower bridge, all the while keeping my eyes ahead as though fixed in a vise. Almost beside myself with excitement, I thumped on the door of Captain McFarlane's cabin.

The door opened, and he came out. If he was surprised to see the four of us standing there, he did not show it. He cocked his head to one side, and a twinkle came into his eyes. I wondered if he was so old that he could not perceive the character of the woman.

"Ye've brought the laddie home in grand style," he said pleasantly. "Where

did ye find him?"

The policeman cleared his throat. "He was with this woman, sir," he said, glancing sternly sidewise and moving back a step. "She's a bad one, sir," he went on, "and you can prefer a charge against her for harborin' him. They were comin' through the dock-gates when I nabbed them."

Captain McFarlane smiled. "Commendable—verra commendable, Officer," he said slowly; then he asked: "But did ye no stop to think that mebbe she was bringin' him back hersel'? Ye see, she may be what she is tae men, but, man, she's got a heart like ye an' me." He turned toward the woman, who had maintained a stubborn silence. "Ye've been kind tae him, lassie?" he asked. She nodded, and I saw her swallow. Captain McFarlane smiled again. He put his hnd in his pocket and drew out some money. "Here's some siller, lassie," he said. "It's no verra much, but it'll pay the rent for a wee." He waved her thanks away, and stepping forward, patted her gently and affectionately on the shoulder. Without a word she hastened away, and he watched her, with many a nod of his wise old head, until she had disappeared beyond the frowning coal-tip; then, pressing a sovereign into the policeman's hand, he said, reproachfully though not unkindly: "Dinna be sae quick tae jump tae conclusions. Ye see, a fence, like a woman, has twa sides. It's always best tae be sure where ye're goin' tae land afore ye jump. Guid day tae ye."

Whatever doubts the policeman had, the sovereign appeased them. Standing to attention, he touched the rim of his helmet with a smart salute, and turning about, he walked off with his chin high.

The tugs tooted their sirens imperatively, and Captain McFarlane said: "They're gettin' impatient. I'll ha'e tae get on my uniform. Ye'd better run awa' doon, laddies; we're leavin' in a minute."

He backed into his cabin and shut the door behind him. Jamie looked at me, and I at him. We had both expected a reprimand, and when it had not come, we were at once relieved and weak about the knees. But Captain McFarlane was always like that. He seemed to have an uncanny insight into human nature. One harsh word, at that moment, would have killed the spirit that was left in Jamie. By his silence Captain McFarlane bound him not only to himself but to the sea. Jamie would never run away again.

I took Jamie by the hand. "Come on,"

I said.

Descending from the bridge, we ran

full tilt into Mr. Boxley.

"So! You've come back, eh?" he bellowed, reaching out to grasp Jamie by the scruff of the neck.

In midair his hand poised as though held up by an invisible wire. He lis-

tened intently, his head sunk down on his shoulders. From the forward-well deck came a perturbing crash, and a confusion of wild cries.

"What's that?" he barked.

Ernie came running along the deck. "Spifkins has dropped the starboard derrick, sir," he cried. "It's smashed!"

Mr. Boxley swore a mighty oath. I thought his cheeks would burst, so red did they become. He pushed us out of his way, and his eyes searched around the deck for a weapon. Finding none, he started forward, his whole body bent forward under the weight of his wrath. But luckily for Spifkins, he had not taken more than a dozen steps when Captain McFarlane appeared on the lower bridge.

"All hands on stand by, Mister! The tide's at the full, an' there's no a minute

to lose!" he ordered.

Mr. Boxley brought up as though against a wall. He looked from Captain McFarlane to the wreckage.

"Aye-aye, sir!" he answered.

He had decided, I could see, that the dispatch of the *Monarch* came before the gratification of his wrath.

FOUR hours later I was on the forecastle-head, leaning against the starboard warping-drum of the windlass as I endeavored to keep a good look-out

through eyes blurred with sleep.

Soon after the Monarch had cleared the dock-gates at Cardiff, and everything around the decks had been lashed and snugged down, Mr. Boxley had ordered the sailor-men to muster alongside the fiddley so that the watches could be set. The sailors, suffering from the after-effects of their farewell spree, had refused to come aft—deciding no doubt, in their befuddled brains, that a reprimand and a fine of five shillings would be much easier to bear than a night of duty. The cadets—Ernie, Spifkins, Jamie and I—and the two ordinary seamen, Smith and Wilkins, had perforce to fill in, standing watch-and-watch until the sailor-men would be capable of taking over. After having been forty-eight hours on deck without sleep, it did not seem quite fair, yet we knew that there was nothing that could be done about it. If we had complained, Mr. Boxley would have shouted: "If you're not satisfied see the Scotch consul when you get back. He's a kind soul, and he'll listen to you." He would have laughed then, as he walked away-knowing, as he did,

that the Scotch consul was a mythical personage as elusive as the Liverpool

Man who did not exist!

The Bull Light, a brilliant ruby set on the frowning brow of the land, drew abaft the port beam, holding back by its fiery glow, so it seemed, all the clamor and turmoil of the days in port; ahead, the flares of the smacks, fishing off the coast, burst upon the far horizon with the promise of adventure; and walking up into the bow to watch the phosphorescent curl of water breaking from under the forefoot, I thought of the Monarch not as a hard ship, torturing us on the wheel of duty, but as a comfortable old wagon with the smell of bilgewater and Stockholm tar hanging always about her to stir the hearts of men, and of boys, who cared not whither they went, nor when. Let the boys at home have their warm beds! We had the long wide-awake nights in which to dream, fashioning the experiences of the day into a cloak that would be as varied in color as that which Jacob wore. Even Jamie was content to be on board after his wild flight. The woman had been kind. She had found him weeping in a doorway. She had taken him home and cared for him as a mother would, but when the day had come, revealing an abject squalor, he had missed the security of the ship, and she had brought him back...

Three bells struck on the bridge. Straightening up with a jerk, I walked to the large bell suspended from its bracket before the windlass, and grasping the rope lanyard, I struck it three times in answer with all my might. It had a deep, resonant note. The Voice of the Sea, I thought. My heart responded so violently to its vibrations that when I shouted, after making a brief inspection all around, "Lights are burning bright, sir, and all's well!" I was afraid that "Lord Percy" (our new third mate) on the bridge would think that I had been asleep on duty,—so lustily did my voice go down the wind,—and order

me aft to be reprimanded.

A second of suspense. Then, "Aye-

aye!" he answered calmly.

Reassured, I walked up again into the bow, to find a man sitting on the anchorchain, where it entered the hawse-pipe. His head was cupped in his hands, and he groaned as if in pain.
"Who's that?" I asked, anxiously.

"Who d'ye bleedin' well think hit is? A ghoust?" he snapped in a sharp voice;

then he said more quietly: "It's me, 'Arry 'Oskins, who feels like 'e's 'ad Ma Tatem's pigsty for 'is supper. The blarsted pigs a-keep runnin' around in m' guts."

"Why don't you stay down in your bunk then, where it's comfortable?" I suggested, sitting down on the other

anchor-chain.

"Wot d' ye mean?" he shot out, leaning toward me ferociously. "Me stay down there with 'im who haint got no 'ead at all? 'E haint 'uman."

WANTED to laugh but he was so solemn I refrained. Vollman was up to his old trick. In the Boxer Rebellion the top of his head had been so badly pierced by a Chinese spear that the bone had to be removed. He was bald, and whenever he wanted to annoy anyone, which was frequently, he depressed his cranium with his index finger. It created a feeling of nausea in the observer, and the more one shivered, the louder Vollman would laugh in a guttural way. He would declare too, at such times, that we were but a spineless lot.

Four bells struck on the bridge. answered them as quietly as I could, and walking abaft the windlass, I paced back and forth across the forecastle-head in an effort to keep myself from falling asleep. Soon after five bells the wind freshened from the south with a damp breath; the ruffle of cloud on the horizon grew larger; a thin veil of mist drifted across the stars, extinguishing them one after the other; and the ironwork of the forecastle-head glistened where the glare from the foremast light touched the dew that settled on it in large opalescent beads. A bank of fog came with a rush, to pass on toward the northward with a lightning swiftness. Another followed close on its heels, then the third one settled about the *Monarch* like a smothering blanket, and the glow from the steaming lights made it seem as if she were imprisoned in a poorly illuminated tunnel which had no end.

The engine-room telegraph clanged. Stand by! I could see the chief engineer stumbling down the long iron ladders in his haste to be near his engines. Gna-a-a-a-a-a! The long blast on the siren seemed to rip the night apart with its warning note. Every two minutes it would sound, and the ears of the watchers upon the bridge would be strained to catch an answer from within the fog.

The fog became more dense. It was with difficulty I could distinguish the bridge. The foremast light was only a faint glow, like a bloodshot eye peering from behind swollen lids.

"Put her on half speed!"

Captain McFarlane's order came so distinctly that I spun around on my heels, expecting to find him on the forecastle behind me. But he was not there. The moisture of the air had only intensified the sound. I turned back toward the bow, and peered ahead. I knew that our siren would not be heard very far on such a night: the sighing of the wind and the slapping of the sea would muffle it. I knew also that there were many fishing-smacks in the vicinity, and that the *Monarch* was crossing the traffic-lanes to the west of England.

Back toward the bow I turned—to stand transfixed: Dead ahead rose a solid black wall. It seemed like a squall, banking up before a shift of wind. Again, it might be a ship! I rubbed my eyes. I peered into the murkiness with a strained intensity, my heart beating frantically. Just as my whole body began to freeze into a dread immobility, the churn of a propeller came down on

the surface airs.

I cupped my hands around my mouth. I shouted toward the bridge: "Vessel ahead, sir! Vessel dead ahead!"

Hoskins staggered to his feet, and shouted to his ship-mates down below; then I heard Captain McFarlane order sharply: "Full astern! Ring her up!"

There was nothing at the moment that I could do. The engine-room telegraph jangled. The siren sounded an unruffled blast. Doors banged open. The sailormen, fearing a collision, tumbled from their bunks and raced out on deck, falling over each other in their haste. The loom on the fog held its position—grew larger. The engines commenced to go astern. The swishing under the forefoot lessened—fell away to a gentle murmur. The loom broadened on the port bow.

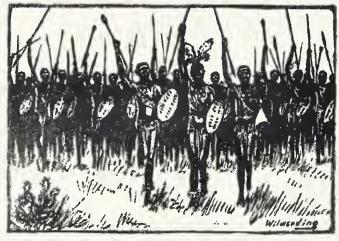
"She's going clear! She's going clear, sir!" I yelled toward the bridge.
"Aye-aye!" the third mate replied.

The churn of the stranger's propeller cleared the surface of the sea with a frightening growl as it passed close ahead; then it died away, leaving a tense silence, even more terrifying. But as our siren sounded again, the *Monarch* began to move through the water.

Further chapters of Captain Grant's fascinating autobiography will appear in our next issue.

A one-time officer in South Africa describes a wild ride to rescue a young girl defending a lonely farmhouse against natives on the warpath.

By HARRY MADDISON



The Bravest Thing

HEN I was eighteen years of age, I enlisted in the British cavalry and was assigned to a troop of guides, or as Americans call them, scouts. The Boer War came during my second term, and my troop was made a unit of Sir John French's brigade in South Africa. The last two years of my service I was on patrol duty in northern Natal and Rhodesia. When mustered out, along with my captain and a large number of ex-guides, I joined the mounted police then being reorganized and strengthened in northern provinces.

My captain had charge of a large district north of Salisbury, and had a very small force to cover it with; and there was much after-war unrest among the natives. Stories of trouble and danger came in from all sides, and it was hard to tell idle gossip from real danger.

Because it was easy for me to learn native dialects and to tell how the natives would act under unusual circumstances, I was assigned to "listening-in" duty almost constantly. Sometimes alone, sometimes in conjunction with another officer who passed as a stranger, I spent months among the native kraals and villages posing as a hunter, miner, laborer, anything but a policeman, making friends with the natives and sending in warnings of possible danger, so that the pride and boast of the force, which was to avert native trouble without conflict or bloodshed, could be maintained.

One day I received an order which read: "Reported that the mixed tribe villages in northern part of district are

talking religious war. Find out if it is serious."

These mixed villages, products of the native mine and farm labor turned loose by the war, were bad and always ready for trouble. So I went up on the post stage, posing as a hunter going to join my outfit. Among the passengers I noticed a schoolgirl about sixteen years of age, evidently traveling alone and just out from England—vividly out of place in that rough stage and wild country.

I was the only passenger left when we got to the terminal, and I at once hunted up my outfit and got ready to start at daybreak. Trouble went with us from the start. Before we stopped for breakfast, signal drums were booming ahead of us, and the carriers were panicky and hard to hold. I camped near the worst village, soon found men I had known before, and learned what the trouble was.

Some newly arrived missionaries who did not know local conditions had preached the doctrines of white and black brotherhood so strongly that the natives were convinced they were illtreated, and had begun gathering in bands and armed war-parties, drinking and dancing, and were ready to start trouble. The missionaries, aghast at the turmoil they had started, and knowing no way to stop it, tried to flee, and as far as could be learned, were the only victims of their teaching.

I sent out warnings by trusted Zulus and Kafirs, and tried to find out where the drink- and religion-crazed blacks

would try to strike first.

A Kafir chief, an old friend, found out and told me. The John Martin home, the most exposed in the district, about eighty miles southwest, was unprotected. The natives had learned that Martin and his white helpers were bringing supplies from Salisbury with ox-teams, and would not get home for several days, and that Mrs. Martin and another woman were at the farm alone with only black help. When I learned about it, a band of blacks were already far on their way.

I sent out a general report by the most trusted men I could find, and started for the nearest police station about twenty miles away, and in the same general direction as Martin's. When I arrived at the station, only the house-boy was in charge, the inspector and his men being out on patrol. There was no time to lose, for it was doubtful if anyone could get to the farm before the blacks struck. I left a report, took two fresh horses, the extra one carrying a pack-saddle equipped with a one-inch quick-firer, tripod, and a hundred contact-shell cartridges, and started on a rough crosscountry ride of about seventy miles.

DY noon, both horses had done their best and were failing fast. I commandeered two poor brutes from the very unwilling head-man of a small village, and went on. Late in the afternoon the pack-horse fell and was so badly hurt I had to kill it. At the only kraal I could reach, the head-man was friendly and willing to help, but he had no horses.

I was in despair, for until I could get help, that quick-firer was a vital thing to keep. Then, like a gift from heaven, the old head-man wished a stray army mule on me. The brute had had possession of one of their mealie patches for days, and was so vicious none of the natives dared go near the patch, and they were sure it

would kill me.

My only fear was that I could not get near him, but no need to worry! As soon as he saw me coming, he gave a squealing bray and came at me with bared teeth, expecting me to run as the natives had. But he knew what the rope meant, and stopped when it struck his neck. He was the meanest, toughest mule I ever saw; and like all guides, I had served my time learning to handle the transport, which meant mules. But I surely needed a tough one then. I had to hog-tie him to get the gear strapped; then I had to keep the throw-rope on to keep him from bolting with my precious

gun. But he never faltered or seemed to tire, and was better than any horse could

have been in the hills.

The horse played out while I was still several miles from the farm; and just nineteen hours after I left the police station, that mule carried both me and the gun to the Martin house. And there, in the early dawn, I saw the strangest sight I have ever seen. On the almost level veldt between the farm and the hills, nearly two hundred armed and hideously painted natives were chanting, dancing and drinking, working themselves into a frenzy to rush the farm buildings. The big farmhouse was built for defense, and so that it could be attacked from the front only; and slowly up and down the wide veranda, a bandolier of cartridges around her shoulder, a Lee-Metford rifle in her hands, the schoolgirl I had seen on the post stage four days before kept guard—alone.

The blacks had seen me ride up, and I knew they would either make their rush at once or give up and scatter, for they would know other help would be near. I got the gun off the mule, and set up in the angle of the gate, slammed in a shell, made sure it was in working order, then went up to the porch steps and said to the girl: "All right, lady! I'll take over now." She looked nearly dead; muttering something she went slowly into the house, still carrying the gun.

I heard afterward that she had left her English home only four weeks before, had been in Africa only ten days, and had never seen a painted savage till the evening before. All their black help had deserted at the first sign of trouble; Mrs. Martin, an expectant mother, had collapsed, and was helpless in bed after the natives began to arrive the night before, so that the girl was worse off than if she had been alone. She was nearly paralyzed with fear, but she had stood guard all night and fired the rifle whenever she thought the natives sounded nearer. I did not see her again after she went into the house, and I never even heard her name; but I still think what she had done was the bravest thing I ever heard or knew of.

WENT back to keep watch at my gun. The mule, as soon as released, gave me a dirty look and began to breakfast off Martin's lawn, as unconcerned as if he had not done twenty miles of wild hills at forced speed and carried double part of the way.

The natives plainly had no good leader, so I just watched them and smoked to keep awake. After a short time they began to form an irregular front facing the house, and shout and beat their shields with their spears. The few who had guns fired them

few who had guns fired them.

A few large boulders made a gap near the center of their front. I lined the gun carefully and exploded three spaced shells against the boulders. The whole front gave a start. They could not understand how the gun got there. They began to mill around and talk again. It was now broad daylight, and I knew that if they held off a little longer, help would surely come, for the three spaced shots were a hurry call for help to any white man within hearing. I kept the gun ready and watched the blacks, and anxiously watched the foothills through my glasses.

Soon the talking and shuffling died down again, the irregular front formed again, and started forward. I trained the gun on the fiercest-looking bunch, and took one last look at the foothills—and said a wild and fervent prayer of thanks when the glasses picked out a splotch of red sweeping down a coulee

from the east.

There was no heart in the native charge. They seemed to know they had waited too long. They came to within about seventy-five feet when something seemed to warn them, and they came to a dragging halt. I slowly traversed the gun along their front, and most of them watched the muzzle as if fascinated.

Then they gasped as the clear notes of a bugle sounded *Rescue*. There were only eight policemen: Inspector Blake, from Milleroo Station, and seven of his men; but they rode right through that bunch of blacks, who drew sullenly back.

Inspector Blake knew me, though I was not in his district or in uniform. He dismounted and came slowly and stiffly up to the gun. He had plainly ridden hard and far. He returned my salute and looked at the gun, but seemed to look longer at the cigarette-butts scattered around. Then he looked at me again and said: "All right, Sergeant. We'll take over now."

Then I felt just deadly tired. I went to the stone fence where I would be out of the way, and was lying down, when there came a raucous, squealing bray, and I saw a policeman run from the lawn just ahead of the bared teeth of the mule. But—good sturdy old mule!



FEW months after the fatal fourth of August, 1914, I sailed from New York, and after a month in training, I was attached to the Murat Indian

division as a field engineer.

A year or more later my company was transferred to the 38th Division, the Red Dragons. At the end of a long series of deadly and ineffectual engagements, I was called into corps headquarters, questioned on my motor experience and sent to England. There I was assigned to the tanks, and shortly afterward was back in France in time for the Somme offensive of 1916. As soon as heavier-engined tanks came, I was placed in charge of a Mark 5 Star A tank, mounting two six-pounders and five Vickers machine-guns, carrying a crew of fifteen men and one officer.

There had been lots of excitement about our camp, and so no one was surprised when a squad of twelve tanks was ordered to move, by night, to a position some distance behind the reserve lines. We went up at intervals to avoid observation by the enemy, and found a well-camouflaged hiding place where we were ordered to rest until time for the attack. There we stayed for two more nights, which were busy with the marching masses of infantry, the continual stream of field-guns and the batteries of howitzers. The officers in charge of the various tanks had to study the line of advance and see that temporary bridges on which to cross the deeper trenches were prepared. . .

Everything is ready. We have emergency rations, first-aid kits, full canteens. We wait with engines running. The advance is to start at five-five A.M. At four-fifty we move forward ahead of the infantry, to lead the attack. The artillery barrage increases. Now we pass over the front line trenches—our big tank tearing a path through our own wire—and head straight for the enemy. The barrage is a roaring sea of sound. The ground in front of us heaves, rolls and breaks apart in great waves; dirt and dust cover us in a mist like spray from a savage ocean.

Storming the Hook

He's an Indian agent out in Arizona now. But he remembers very clearly a terrific day when he drove a tank through the enemy lines on the Somme.

By C. K. SUTHERLAND

The enemy counter-battery fire is getting heavier, and we are conscious of a new sound, strange and terrible to those who are in the tanks for the first time. With the noise of a hundred riveting machines, thousands and thousands of machine-gun and rifle bullets are hammering us every minute. The gunners are seeking a loose joint or bolt-hole, any entrance to stop our engine or explode our ammunition. As we crush through the enemy's wire, they throw dozens of hand grenades and shoot bombs at us. If our tracks become damaged and we stop, their artillery will tear us to pieces. Tanks, helpless for a moment, have disintegrated like sand under the momentarily concentrated fire of dozens of batteries.

We are through the wire; into the trench we go, then up the other side, raking both sides with our Vickers guns. Across the next traverse is a machine-gun post. We go toward it. Some of the men run out. Our guns in the turret cut them down. The tank is on top of the post. We disengage one track, swing around. Under our weight the gun post gives way and crushes down-men, guns, bombs and ammunition—all in one bloody mass.

The temperature is rising in the tank. Our machine-guns and six-pounders work hard all the time. The exploded shellcases fall inside the tank, and each contributes its bit of smoke and heat. The enemy are using a gas that saponifies the engine oil. We turn on our oil-pipes that carry new oil from receptacles to the connecting-rods. The terrific hammering and shaking we are getting loosens up our exhaust-pipes. Some of the men are sick in their gas-masks. The stench from gas masks, burnt exhaust gases, fumes from used cartridge and shell-cases, combined with the engine heat, make it almost unbearable, but we must go on.

With my head strapped to the peephole, I can see only in front. The sergeant in the turret taps my right shoulder. I direct the driver to the right. The tank swings around... We see that the tank on our right has been struck. A shell has penetrated the steel armor, exploded, and set fire the hundred-gallon gasoline tank. The whole tank is a volcano of black smoke and angry red flames. No one can escape.

Thank God, their end is swift.

We attack the machine-gun post toward which our sister unit was advancing when struck. It consists of three pillboxes—shellproof concrete shelters for the machine-gunners, shaped like a beaverhouse, having convex tops with a slot for the machine-guns, the only part above the surface. We swing into the trench behind one and toss a few Mills bombs at the small opening in the rear through which the gunners enter. There is a sudden explosion; the firing stops; we attack the next pillbox. Heavy shelling has undermined it. Our great tank pushes it over. The defenders, rolling out, are caught and crushed under our tracks. The third pillbox concentrates its fire on us, using machine-guns and tank-rifles. Our infantry, held up until we capture the post, rise up and sweep over them in a khaki flood.

SEVERAL tanks have been put out of action. Here and there on the line of advance we can see the fire-ravished hulks. The roar of artillery is deafening. The enemy is shelling our reserve lines and communications, in an attempt to prevent reinforcements coming up to aid our thin and shattered line, which is still struggling to reach its objective. The tank on our left is out of the action, its tracks broken and hull pierced in a dozen places. It affords small shelter for its crew, who are desperately struggling to get their machine-guns out and set them up for action elsewhere.

Our own condition is getting worse. My men have been working at top speed and have almost reached the limit of endurance. Several are wounded by shellsplinters that have entered past loosened plates. The terrific hammering we have received, in addition to loosening plates and breaking rivets, has buckled the guide

in which our left track runs, so that our course is zigzag. Our thermometer registered 120 degrees F. before a flying splinter broke it. Powder fumes and exhaust gases have poisoned the air until the men are sick at their stomachs and have bursting headaches. We are the only one left of our squad of four tanks.

WE are heading toward a low hill the enemy has made into a redoubt, heavily manned by machine-guns and mortars. The infantry has been held up at this critical point. The redoubt must be carried before our advance can continue, and we are making a desperate effort to force the redoubt. As we have to go a few hundred yards to the left, I push up my head-strap and take stock of our condition. One six-pounder and three machine-guns are still in action. Four of my men are on the floor, their bodies twisted grotesquely. Some have their gasmasks partly off. They had struggled for air and died of gas poisoning.

I break loose a canteen of rum, and stepping carefully over the bodies, I pass it in turn to each of the remaining men. Each takes a copious draught. It is amazing to see the lines smooth out of their faces and a light come to their haggard eyes as the stimulant takes effect. A glance at the gasoline-gauge shows forty minutes more gas left. I straighten the bodies and wedge them with ammunition boxes to prevent rolling. My sergeant returns the

canteen.

"Can we make it?" he croaks.

"We've gas enough," I answer. "As we're the only unit left, we must, or the

advance may be held up."

I return to my seat and hand the canteen to the driver. He pushes up his mask and drinks heavily, but awkwardly. This in his first major engagement. The clamp on his nose and breathing through his mouth bothers him.

By this time our advance on the redoubt has been noticed. The counter-battery action has reached the intensity of drumfire. A box barrage is forming on the front and both sides of the redoubt. To attack we must first pass through this curtain of fire. Slowly, erratically, we push on. The hammering on our hull is tripled. The roar is deafening. We reach the first protective work. We are through the barrage. The fire of the redoubt is now concentrated on us. We crush in the first shelter. Veering crazily, our tank goes on to the first defense. A shell explodes under our rear end. We are whirled half

around, and then we slide head foremost down behind their main defensive works, all the while our Vickers guns working to their limit. We have stormed the

redoubt!

Through the smoke and haze I see our infantry stream past. There is the flash of bombs and the gleam of bayonets. Suddenly I am knocked off my seat. The tank falls apart. I gasp for breath. Some one drags me out. Dimly I realize I am being pulled away from the burning tank. It has received a direct hit from a shell. I feel as if there is no connection between my left hip and body.

My sergeant gives me a drink. "All gone, sir, but the Corporal and me. And you got a bad one in the side." A Red Cross man cuts away my tunic, puts on a

pad with adhesive tape.

Enemy prisoners are passing back toward our lines. I am rolled on a stretcher. Six dazed and frightened prisoners pick me up and set off. They follow the arrow-marked lane leading back of the line to the first-aid station and safety. I am horrified as I see the long straggling lines of walking wounded. There seem to be thousands.

When we reach the first-aid, stretcher cases cover the ground for a hundred yards in front of the entrance. As my bearers stop, a Red Cross man looks at me. He calls a doctor who looks at my side. They make out a card and fasten it to the buttonhole of my tunic. A hypo pricks me.

The doctor says: "I am sending you to the hospital train. They will operate."

I am placed in an ambulance with other urgent cases. Over the shell-torn road we go. At last I see the train. Soon it starts. I am growing weaker. My numbed side burns and throbs. My card reads: "Shrapnel wound—abdominal cavity torn—intestines exposed. Operate at once." It is getting dark. I am unconscious at times, then voices, darkness.

AM in bed surrounded by gray clouds. They seem to be thinning. A face appears, blue eyes, a nurse's cap. A low voice says: "You are all right. They operated on the boat. You are in Guy's Hospital, London." I feel a soft hand washing out my mouth....

Daily Mail headline:

HOOK TRENCH CAPTURED

A salient in which was located the Monchy redoubt, commonly called the 'Hook' was successfully straightened out. Our casualties were heavy, but not out of proportion! to 'the 'advantage gained.



The Buffalo Hunter

By FRANK DALTON

T the close of the Civil War we were camped on Bayou Mason in northeast Louisiana until October, when some of us, including Doc Shirley and I, joined Joe Shelby to go to Mexico and fight with Maximilian, who was trying to set up an empire down there. We joined Maximilian's army at Monterey; but after being in a few battles and skirmishes, the most of us got disgusted at the blunders of the inexperienced officers in command, and so we left and came back to Texas, where Doc and I stayed until the spring of '67. We were outlawed, as were all the men who had fought under Quantrell, and we didn't dare to go back to our homes.

Hearing of a railroad being built from Kansas City to Denver, Doc and I headed there, bent on adventure. On arriving at Wamego, which was the first division west of Kansas City, we met a fellow by the name of Comstock who told us that he was a buffalo-hunter and wanted us to go with him farther west and hunt buffalo for the grading-camps. They were paying three cents a pound for the dressed carcasses, and would gladly take all we could bring, for as the country was overrun by hostile Indians, buffalo-hunters were rather scarce. The grading-camps were scattered along the prairie all the way from Junction City to Brookfield, which was to be the next division point. Soldiers were stationed all along to protect the workers from Indians, who were bitterly contesting every mile of construction—as they well knew that the railroad meant white settlers, and good by to the buffalo, on which the Indians largely subsisted.

We picked Bush's grading-camp, as it was one of the largest; and after contracting for all the meat we could furnish, got ready for business by securing a couple of pack-mules. Everything went fine for about two weeks; the buffalo were not hard to kill, and all we had to do was to locate a herd and sneak up on the windward side as close as we could get and then charge in and shoot what we wanted. We found that our six-shooters did very well for this work, as all we needed to do was to ride up and shoot them just behind the left shoulder. After killing what we wanted, we would go back and skin them, and after dressing and cutting them up, we would load our pack-mules and go to camp. Hide-buyers would visit us every week or so, and we would sell the green buffalo hides at from seventy-five cents to a dollar and a half, according to size and condition.

One day we spotted a bunch of five, about six miles from Bush's camp.

"What's the matter with delivering these on the hoof, Frank?" said Doc. "It will beat having to cut them up and pack them."

"All right, old son," I answered, "but be sure that we are close enough in to not let them get in among the tents, or

we might be sorry."

Everything went fine and we dropped them all with the farthest one not twenty yards from the cook's tent. It was Sunday, and everyone was in camp, and many of them had their first opportunity to see a genuine buffalo-hunt at close range. Of course nearly everyone volunteered to skin and dress them, so all we did was to stand by and look important.

We found that everything was not plain sailing, however, for we had to keep a constant lookout for Indians, and even then we were often jumped by them and had to run for it. Being mounted on superior horses, we had no trouble in getting away ourselves, but on two occasions we lost our pack-mules.

Comstock left us as soon as we learned how to hunt, as two were plenty for that kind of work, and Doc and I had been pals during the war and since.

A friend of Comstock by the name of Cody, ("Buffalo Bill," he called himself) came along, and the two of them put in together. I was to get better acquainted with Cody in later years as he was a civilian teamster (ambulance driver) in the 5th Cavalry, in which I soldiered. He later became a showman.

WE occasionally heard stories of Indians who could shoot an arrow clear through a full-grown buffalo, but I never saw it done but once, although I have seen lots of them attempt it. The Potawatami, who had a reservation a few miles northwest of Topeka, the capital of Kansas, were out near Fort Hays on their fall buffalo-hunt, to get meat for the winter, when a young Indian by the name of Mishnonsey singled out an old bull, and riding up alongside of him sent an arrow clear through his body just back of the short ribs. The arrow, which was a common hunting arrow with a flint head, and was shot from a running horse at a running target, went through the buffalo, and dropped to the ground on the other side. Lieutenant Tom Custer (General Geo. A. Custer's brother), who was in charge of the troops guarding the Indians on their hunt, saw this shot, as well as I and several others.

One afternoon about three o'clock we heard shooting over to the west of where we were skinning and cutting up our day's kill of buffalo, but thinking that perhaps it was Comstock and Cody, who had ridden out that way to do their hunting for the day, we paid no attention to it for a while until I noticed that the shots were being spaced peculiarly—that is, three shots, an interval, then three more, which is a distress signal.

"Come on, Doc," I said, "let's go see what's up over there. Maybe Comstock

and Cody have found themselves some Injuns."

Sure enough, when we got to the top of the hill and peeped over, there they were in a buffalo-wallow, using their dead horses and pack-mules for breastworks, while back up the side of the hill and just out of rifle-range were about twenty-five or thirty Indians. We knew that their intention was to wait till night and then sneak in, so we had plenty of time.

"Doc," I said, "you wait here and keep a watch on things, and I'll go for help, as I have the best horse. It's only about twelve miles to Fort Harker, and I ought to make it there and back with the sol-

diers long before sundown."

I had only ridden about four miles, however, when I heard a bugle off to the left, and on topping the hill I saw them and signaled. I told the captain in charge what was up; we lit out at a gallop, and were soon in a fight—savage but short, as there was a full troop of soldiers. Cody and Comstock mounted Indian ponies and we set out for camp—after Doc and I had packed our meat. That evening I got to talking to the captain and found out that his father and mine had soldiered in the Mexican War together. My father was captain of a troop of cavalry, while his was first lieutenant of the same troop, besides which the two families were neighbors and friends in my far-off Georgia home. His father, who had remained in the army, was not in the Civil War, but was stationed on the frontier, to protect the settlers from the Indians. He was now a colonel and in command of Fort Harker.

As it was getting along toward winter when the grading-camps would have to shut down till the next spring, Doc and I quit our job of hunting buffalo and went to Fort Harker with the troops for the winter. We were employed as scouts and dispatch-bearers till the next spring, when I decided to join the army, which

I did on the 8th of March, 1868.

IT wasn't long until I was made first sergeant of my brother-in-law's troop. Yes, I married my colonel's pretty daughter. She was sixteen and I was twenty. We lived together from 1868 to 1921, not only husband and wife, but "pals" in every way. Since she has gone, I get very lonely, and my mind often strays to scenes long past—of an empire in the making—of Indian warriors who bitterly resented the advance of the white man.

As I pen this out in my lonely camp, I am in my eighty-sixth year, and not much like the youth who once sought adventure for adventure's sake; but if I have helped to make of our West a safer place for you to live in, I am content.



BY ELLERY QUEEN

Backwards...backwards...everything was backwards...
the pictures and furniture, even the dead man's coat and
trousers. The murderer had pursued a method apparently
mad and meaningless, fantastic and thrilling... And the
denouement of this breathtaking novel is as surprising as
its opening. All of which gives a hint of the weird fascination in store for readers of "The Chinese Orange Murder"
by Ellery Queen. Over 50,000 words long... and a masterpiece of mystery fiction. Thousands of people will pay \$2.00
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Watch out for the signs of jangled nerves

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